EARLY BYZANTINE CHURCHES IN MACEDONIA AND SOUTHERN SERBIA

A Study of the Origins and the Initial Development of East Christian Art



R. F. HODDINOTT

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DETAIL FROM THE APSE MOSAIC, HEAD OF CHRIST

I CHAPEL OF HOSIOS DAVID, THESSALONICA

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BY

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TO MY WIFE

Preface

In the last thirty years archaeology has transformed the picture of Macedonia and Southern Serbia between the fourth and seventh centuries from the almost blank hinterland of Thessalonica (or Salonica) into an important source of Early Byzantine history and art. Two examples will suffice to illustrate the measure of this change, which for the most part has been the work of Greek and Yugoslav archaeologists, although others, too, have made valuable contributions. At Caričin Grad, during the thirties and since the Second World War, the ruins of a city founded by Justinian the Great have gradually been uncovered from the soil of a remote and previously unremarkable Serbian hillock. A unique example of sixth-century town planning, the buildings enclosed within its walls included an episcopal palace and five major churches. At Philippi, only five years ago, excavations were begun which revealed the remains of a basilica dating to the time of Constantine the Great. The earliest church yet to have been discovered in Greece and erected only a few years after the official recognition of the Christian religion in the Roman Empire, it may have consecrated the actual site, 'out of the city by a river side', where St. Paul 'sat down and spake unto the women which resorted thither' and preached the Gospel of Christianity for the first time in Europe.

These and the results of many other recent excavations have given this part of the Balkans an unusually rich and rare continuity of early church art and architecture. As each church has been the subject of an archaeological report and frequently of considerable subsequent research, this book does not aim to present original discoveries. It is intended rather to be a study of the interrelationship of the individual monuments of the region and of their significance to the wider field of Byzantine and Western Christianity, then still joined in a single Communion. Nevertheless, as much of the basic material has only been published in Greek or Serbo-Croat and in archaeological journals which in some cases have long been out of print and are not easy to obtain, the descriptions, plans and illustrations of the churches which appear in Part III should have an additional value as an account of what has been achieved to date. Thus it may be an aid to students and others to whom the original documents are not all available.

Macedonia occupied a strategic position close to the heart of the Byzantine Empire. Although a European province, straddling the road linking Constantinople and the Adriatic, the situation of its chief city, Thessalonica, on the Thermaic Gulf and the conquests of Alexander the Great established for its southern and most populous part a lasting orientation towards Western Asia. At the beginning of the historic age it had been the meeting-ground of the Greek and of the Illyrian and the Thracian civilisations. By the end of the sixth century A.D. it had begun to serve a similar purpose for the cultures of Greece and of the migrating Slavs. Eventually it was where, through the influence of Christianity, these came to terms.

Thessalonica's wealth and military importance, as well as its nearness to Constantinople, ensured that many of its leading Early Byzantine monuments reflected the art of the capital, so little of which has survived from this period. In this respect the late fourth-century Theodosian mosaics in the Rotunda of St George have an importance equivalent to those of Justinian's era in S. Vitale at Ravenna. Nevertheless, Thessalonica's jealousy of Constantinople, reminiscent of the internecine rivalries of the Greek city-states, remained a disruptive influence in their relationship. Macedonia, half-way between Rome and Constantinople, inevitably became an area of contention between the two, but the sympathies of Thessalonica were for a long time ranged with those centres, chiefly Rome and Alexandria, which provided the opposition to the capital. This conflict is reflected in the church art and architecture which, in the sixth century, similarly mirrored the changing ethnic pattern of the central Balkan region and the Byzantine Empire's unsuccessful first attempt to subdue the new Slav settlers. In the ensuing 'dark age' only Thessalonica survived, to a great extent through its citizens' faith in St Demetrius — the Christian successor of earlier heroes such as the Cabiri and the Thracian Horseman — to become the base from which Byzantine civilisation was to reassert itself in the ninth century.

To-day, the facilities for swift and easy travel and developments in photography and colour printing have helped us to a realisation of Byzantine aesthetic values possible to only a limited number of scholars half a century ago. Yet, although many isolated examples of Byzantine religious art can be appreciated as works of dignity and beauty, that they were essentially strictly disciplined expressions of the contemporary Byzantine liturgy is easily overlooked. In the early Byzantine era, as this liturgy had not yet attained a final, generally accepted form, its ritual still tended to be a reflection of local religious attitudes. These might vary considerably, for the Byzantine Empire had inherited from Rome a heterogeneous collection of subject peoples to whom Hellenistic influences and Roman administration had given a little more than superficial community of interests and traditions. The repressions which Christianity had undergone in the Roman Empire during its first three centuries had been an important factor in the cause of Christian unity, for a mutual loyalty and tolerance had been essential to survival. This unity survived the Edicts of Toleration, but the recognition of Christianity as the state religion introduced powerful political pressures which too often found expression in attempts by different politico-religious groups to impose their own ideas upon the rest of Christendom. Each group justified its attitude by passionately searching the Scriptures for supporting interpretations of Christian truths that, however sincerely reached, could not but be coloured by local religious traditions. In the circumstances it is hardly surprising that liturgical unity in the Byzantine Empire was achieved only after the passage of centuries and the loss of important dissenting territories. Throughout this stormy but formative period we find these local attitudes translated into the ecclesiastical art and architecture of the various provinces of the Empire. Macedonia and Southern Serbia, close to the capital and yet exceptionally open to foreign influences, possess a particularly varied range of styles, each of interest not only from aesthetic or archaeological viewpoints but also for what they originally were — fervent and often passionate attempts to create or suitably embellish the appropriate architectural form for the true worship of God.

This book was originally planned as a study of Macedonian and Serbian art in the Middle Ages. However, it soon became clear that an assessment of the vast amount of new information on the early period was an essential preliminary. *Early Byzantine Churches*

in Macedonia and Southern Serbia attempts this task and I must record with pleasure my debt to those scholars upon whose works I have drawn freely. Inevitably, the picture presented is uneven and far from complete. Monuments that have largely escaped destruction can be described in greater detail and discussed more accurately than those of which excavation has only revealed the foundations. Some monuments have provided material for exhaustive monographs that have added greatly to our knowledge of the period. On others we still possess scarcely any information. There must also have existed many more, of considerable importance in their time, of which we do not yet even know the sites.

Particularly in Part III, when dealing with the monuments, it has often not been easy to summarise a lengthy report in a few pages. It is almost an impertinence to try to compress in this way such works as Lemerle's on Basilicas A and B at Philippi and Sotiriou's on the Basilica of St Demetrius. However, I can only hope that I may be forgiven by these and other authors should I in any place have failed to summarise their conclusions accurately.

Terminology has presented a number of problems. Sometimes no word exists in English to describe correctly an Early Byzantine liturgical-architectural form, which, it must also be remembered, was in a constant state of evolution. I have used the term 'chancel screen', for instance, to describe the partition between the sanctuary and the public part of the church. In fourth-century Macedonia this was a low balustrade, by the seventh liturgical developments had changed it into a high partition. To distinguish the altar space from other parts of the sanctuary I have used the Greek term 'bema'. Also I have preferred Thessalonica, which approximates to the ancient and Byzantine name for the chief city of Macedonia as well as that used by Greeks to-day, rather than Salonica, an abbreviation which was not in use until the later Middle Ages.

My indebtedness to Professor D. Talbot Rice is not easy to acknowledge. Without his interest and encouragement over the past five years, his advice over source material, his kindness in reading an early draft and offering numerous helpful suggestions and criticisms, this book would possess little of the substance and whatever value it may now have.

It is a pleasure, too, to express my gratitude to Dr. S. Pelekanides, to whom is due so much of the credit not only for important discoveries but also for the restoration and preservation of Byzantine monuments in Greek Macedonia, for many kindnesses and a great deal of assistance, particularly during my visits there. My thanks are also due to Professor G. Sotiriou for kindly allowing me to reproduce various of his line drawings and his photographs of the sculptural decoration of the Basilica of St Demetrius, and to Professor X. I. Macaronas for kindly permitting me to use photographs taken in the Archaeological Museum of Thessalonica.

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first explored the Byzantine churches of Yugoslav Macedonia. It is also a pleasure to pay tribute here to the kindness and hospitality I have received everywhere in Greece and Yugoslavia and the help which has been forthcoming from officials and private persons alike to enable me to see and learn all that I wished. This hospitable and friendly attitude, which is so characteristic of the Greek and Yugoslav peoples, has certainly been an immense factor in making this study such an enjoyable task.

In a field in which English is a minority language, translations have sometimes presented considerable problems. I must acknowledge with gratitude the painstaking work carried out by Miss Vera Mirić and by my wife in Serbo-Croat, by my wife in Russian and by Mr. N. Constantinides and Mr. S. Sofroniou in Greek. To Mrs. F. Stephens I am similarly grateful for typing not one but several drafts of this book. I also owe much to the facilities of such libraries as the Conway and Courtauld Libraries of the Courtauld Institute, the Joint Library of the Institute of Classical Studies and the Societies for the Promotion of Hellenic and Roman Studies, the Warburg Institute, the Victoria and Albert Museum, and the London Public Libraries. It is a special pleasure to be able here to say 'Thank you' to the librarians and library assistants whose enthusiasm, thoughtfulness and expert knowledge have helped me so much.

Finally, I would like to record my appreciation of my publisher's generous and helpful approach towards this book and my gratitude to my wife for what must be described as collaboration rather than assistance through all the many and varied phases of activity which it has involved.

R. F. H.

LONDON, 1962

Note on Serbo-Croat Pronunciation

c as ts (bi*ts*)
ć as tch (wi*tch*)
č as ch (*ch*urch)
j as y (*y*et)
dj as g (George)
š as sh (*sh*ell)

One metre equals 3·28 feet.

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PART I

MEDITERRANEAN AND ORIENT



ALEXANDER THE GREAT

a. The wooded coastline of the Island of Thasos

b. The upper reaches of the river Struma near Gorna Jumaya, Bulgaria

I EASTERN MACEDONIA



a. View westwards across Lake Little Prespa

2 WESTERN MACEDONIA

b. The Vale of Florina

Chapter I

The Legacy of Alexander

MORE than two thousand years have elapsed since the existence of a sovereign state of Macedonia. Yet, despite a more than ample share of political vicissitudes, some kind of Macedonian identity has persisted within geographical boundaries that have changed little since the time of Philip of Macedon. Such continuity is the more extraordinary since this Macedonian identity has had neither a firm political nor a uni-national basis. Like the Byzantine Empire on a larger scale, throughout its history it has been a synthesis, sometimes easy but often antagonistic, of widely opposed cultures — in the case of Macedonia of the Greek urban and coastal region and the Slav, or, in earlier times, Thraco-Illyrian hinterland.

On a physical map of the Balkans Macedonia appears as the land area bounded in the south by the Aegean Sea and the Olympus and Pindus ranges, by the Pindus and Albanian mountains to the west, northwards by a more variable line traversing the mountains beyond Skopje, where it merges into country originally inhabited by a powerful Illyrian group known as the Dardanians and which later became the Early Byzantine province of Dardania, and to the east by the western ends of the Balkan (or Haemus) and Rhodope ranges of Bulgaria. It also includes the island of Thasos. For the greater part mountainous, the most populous district has always been the city and plain of Thessalonica facing the Gulf of Thermai in the Aegean Sea. Into this flows the Aliakmon river from the west and the Vardar (Axios) from the north.

Following courses roughly parallel to the Vardar, the Strymon (Struma) and the Nestos reach the Aegean east of the mountainous, triple-pronged peninsula of Chalcidice. Macedonia's other important river is the Crni Drim, flowing north from Lake Ohrid through wild and mountainous country to carve a passage for ideas, commerce and invading armies from the northwest. It is the Vardar, however, the final stage of the natural highway from central Europe to the eastern Mediterranean, that is Macedonia's axial and main route, connecting the fertile plains of Thessalonica, Pelagonia and Skopje, and linking them, through its tributary, the Cerna, with the plain of Bitola and the lake settlements of Ohrid and Great and Little Prespa.

This seemingly natural basis for an economic and ethnic national unit was permanently disrupted by the ancient Greeks, the foundation of whose civilisation was not the land but the sea. Greek settlements, whether situated on the shores of the Aegean, the Black Sea, the eastern Mediterranean, the Ionian Sea or, farther west, the Ligurian Sea, had sea not land lanes for their natural 'interior' lines of communication. The wild and rugged country behind was left by them to the 'barbarians' whose savage natures were so appropriate to its character. When the Etruscan and Carthaginian civilisations were flourishing in the western half of the Mediterranean, Macedonia already lay partitioned between the Aegean Greeks, living in the coastal neighbourhood of Thessalonica, on the Chalcidice peninsula and on the island of Thasos, and the Thraco-Illyrians of the hinterland, although archaeological discoveries are beginning to show that there, even as early as the sixth century B.C., Hellenic art and culture had penetrated extensively. A Hellenistic gold death-mask, a bronze mixing-bowl and other items from this period now in the National Museum of Belgrade have been excavated at Trebenište to the north of Lake Ohrid. The Museum of Skopje holds a similarly dated bronze Bacchante found at Tetovo. But the Illyrian civilisation, and its accompanying economic

and military strength, was gradually broken by waves of Celtic invaders, a process which paved the way for the rise of the kingdom of Macedonia in the fourth century B.C.

In this era eastern Macedonia was dominated by the Greek island of Thasos. Conquered from the indigenous Thracians by settlers from Paros in the eighth century B.C., Hellenised Thasos had gradually established its control over the more accessible and profitable parts of the mainland. Supplementing its own natural wealth with the rich agricultural produce of the coastal plains and by exploiting the gold mines of Krenides (Philippi) and Mount Pangaeus, in return the island promoted the Hellenisation of eastern Macedonia's Thraco-Illyrian population. The discovery of its coins as far afield as Transylvania, Hungary, Moravia and Germany are an indication of the importance of Thasos, which was also in commercial relations with Phoenicia, Egypt and the Barbary Coast.

While Philip II (359–336 B.C.) of Macedon receives the credit for creating the first national synthesis of the Greek population of Macedonia's coastal cities and the Illyrian and Thracian tribesmen of the interior, his achievement was founded upon this gradual germination of Greek culture among Macedonia's non-Greek population during the previous centuries. Nevertheless, by establishing his ascendancy over the Greek city-states to the south and drawing upon their deeper rooted civilisation, Philip furthered the Hellenisation of his kingdom to a degree sufficient to give his son, Alexander the Great, the opportunity of victoriously championing the Greek accomplishment against its world rivals.

In Europe, whatever unfulfilled intentions Alexander may have had, the frontiers of Macedonia underwent little change. Both rewards and danger from this direction were relatively small. Eastwards, on the other hand, as far as India and into central Asia, he repeated the work of his father in Macedonia on a gigantic scale. Cyrus and his Achaemenian successors had dreamed of a single world state under the generous and enlightened rule of the divinely appointed Persian king. Alexander turned this dream into a Macedonian reality, creating an empire, the peoples of which became imbued with a sense of unity transcending their racial and historical differences. Hellenic culture followed in the wake of Alexander's conquests. The 'core' of the Hellenic world expanded from its ancient confines of the Aegean Sea to include the whole eastern Mediterranean. Alexandria and Antioch, with their wealthy Egyptian and Syrian hinterlands, joined such older Greek cities as Athens, Pergamum and Rhodes as its formative influences and rapidly grew to dispute their leadership of a civilisation that was changing from Hellenic to Hellenistic. Farther east, after touching more lightly the highly developed civilisations of Babylonia and Persia, Hellenism settled again in the receptive soil of Bactria, Sogdiana and Gandhara. There the art and culture of Greece, bequeathed during Alexander's brief dominion and continued under Seleucid and Kushan rulers, sponsored the first to fourth century A.D. Buddhist art of Gandhara in northern India (Pakistan), and the sculptures of the third to fifth centuries A.D. discovered at Hadda, near Jelalabad in Afghanistan. It even travelled far beyond the limits of Alexander's empire, as can be seen from the Fayum-type wall painting of Buddha at Miran in Sinkiang. To his Macedonian homeland, Alexander bequeathed a more lasting, even permanent legacy, an orientation towards the east which ever since has been reflected in its religious art.

The cultural influences that flowed eastwards as a consequence of Alexander's conquests have aroused more attention than those which spread from east to west. To the Greeks, mankind fell into two classes — Greeks, and others of a lower order. Alexander and his Macedonian nobles, however, possessed no such limiting tradition. They found, particularly in the Persian Empire, a higher and more ancient standard of culture and a richer and more graceful manner of living than they had known in their own homeland, higher even than in Greece itself. Moreover, instead of the Greek system of small and quarrelsome city-states, they met there a conception of empire, which, with all its — not unattractive — despotic qualities, rejected petty nationalistic tendencies. In ideals, to some extent, as well as in territory, the Macedonian Empire was a successor to that of Achaemenian Persia.

The vision and vigour that had won Alexander his victories in war were turned to peaceful ends as he put into effect his plans for partnership between his Greco-Macedonians and those Persians and others who, but

a short time before, had been his adversaries. He offered the latter posts in his court and his army and encouraged his nobles to intermarry. This far-reaching social partnership begun by Alexander and, incredible as it seems, firmly established in the brief time at his disposal, ensured the rooting of Hellenistic culture even where it met with strong competitors. Although the impetus slowed down after Alexander's death and the division of his empire, no immediate reaction occurred against Hellenism. Rather was it the reverse; later indigenous or other rulers of non-Hellenic origin tended to pride themselves on their adherence to its traditions, even to the point of taking Greek names. Nevertheless, Greece, the source of Hellenism, was in a state of decline and, as the Macedonian impetus lost its force, Persia correspondingly increased its ideological contribution to the cultural federation.

In the cults of Apollo and Mithra, both identified with the sun and with youthful beauty, Greco-Macedonians and Persians found themselves on a common religious ground. It is impossible now to say how much each cult absorbed from the other, but it is likely that the interrelationship of the two was an important factor in the cultural unity of this vast region. Although Persia rejected Apollo and Greece Mithra, in later centuries troops of the Roman Empire carried from Asia the westernised, Apollo-influenced cult of Mithra throughout the non-Hellenic European provinces of Rome and established it as the deadliest rival of Christianity until the fateful decision of Constantine in favour of the latter. However, it is indicative of the then relative strengths of Roman and Persian civilisations that this was not a two-way traffic in religious ideas. In Persia, Mithra never became a supreme deity and an Apollo cult was negligible or nonexistent.

Alexander's defeat of Darius not only assured Hellenism its role as one of the formative influences in world civilisation, it decided that the political and cultural centre of the Ancient World should be the eastern Mediterranean instead of Achaemenian Persia. Had the victory been gained by Darius, the eastern Mediterranean would have become an outlying satrapy of the Persian Empire, in art and thought as provincial as in politics. Instead, for all Hellenism's now slowing impetus, the eastern Mediterranean, as metropolitan region, became the hub of every main route of the Ancient World. All roads led to it, as in a later era and empire they were to lead to Rome, and along them travelled ideas from every component civilisation of Alexander's empire as well as those lying beyond its boundaries. Macedonia's exposure to and willing absorption of these ideas and foreign influences, mainly Asiatic in origin, were responsible for giving to much of her early Byzantine art its distinctive characteristics.

The moulds of the civilisations of Greece and Rome were the temperate climate of the Mediterranean, with its sunshine and clear sparkling air, and its — originally — forested mountain slopes and island-studded seas that provided cheap and easy means of communication. Extremes of heat and cold, vast mountain ranges and plateaux, gave altogether different characteristics to the inhabitants of Iran, the Caucasus and the interior of Asia Minor. Different again were the riparian peoples of Egypt and Mesopotamia, where intense heat was associated with more or less inexhaustible agricultural wealth, and the monsoon-governed, agricultural populations of tropical India. Similarly, the Syro-Arabian deserts, where a fierce sun and an unremunerative soil permitted little opportunity for developing the refinements of life, moulded their inhabitants differently from their Semitic brothers who were the builders of highly developed civilisations based on commerce in Mediterranean Syria and the southern parts of the Arabian peninsula. To the north, the mountains, plains and forests of eastern Europe and the vast steppes of Russia were the homelands of an unsettled and uneasy pattern of peoples, contemptuously termed barbarians by the Greek historians, but possessing characteristics that were creative as well as destructive.

In varying measures, these diverse elements had contributed towards the social structure of Alexander's empire and were to form the foundations of the Christian world. Their interaction, a process that had begun long before Alexander, but to which he had given a dynamic impetus, continued to develop in spite of the break-up of his territorial empire. When, six centuries later, Constantine established his capital on the shores of the Bosphorus, his East Roman or Byzantine Empire was fundamentally a perpetuation of the Hellenistic tradition and, besides its Roman heritage, it

acceded automatically to the living legacy of western Asia's past. The civilisations of western Asia and Egypt, therefore, were as much the context of Macedonian history and art as were Greece and Rome, and it is necessary for our understanding of Macedonian art, to examine briefly their potential contributions.

Egypt

In many ways the Nile valley was a cul-de-sac of the Ancient World. Immensely wealthy, but easily defended with the help of its formidable natural obstacles, it was a difficult prize to gain, and one, moreover, which led to nowhere else profitable of conquest. For fifteen hundred years or more prior to the Hyksos invasion midway through the second millennium B.C., Egypt had enjoyed an undisturbed and therefore unique opportunity to develop an exclusive civilisation, the foundations of which it had originally imported from Sumerian Mesopotamia. The cumulative result of this isolation, emphasised by the brief but hated Hyksos dominion and subsequent contacts with less highly developed civilisations during the Egyptian imperial phase, was a deeply rooted dislike and contempt for all foreigners. Internally, this was matched by a conservatism and a strong belief in the superiority and rightness of all things Egyptian.

This national attitude of innate Egyptian superiority persisted even through the degenerative period of the later dynasties of the New Empire and the Persian tyranny into which they dissolved. Nevertheless, by that time Egypt had lost the strength which had enabled her to throw off the Hyksos yoke, and, in the fourth century B.C., it was no native prince, but a new conqueror, Alexander, who 'liberated' Egypt. An important and a permanent consequence of this 'liberation' was the establishment on Egyptian soil for the first time of a new, virile Greek colony. Yet, however much the internationally minded Greeks of Egypt might occupy the limelight of intellectual thought, the Egyptian people maintained unchanged their deeply rooted attitudes towards the rest of the world, particularly in anything that affected their religion. In fact, the more thoroughly they had to submit to political overrule, the more stubbornly did they resist foreign dictation in matters of the spirit.

Egyptian life and Egyptian belief in the after-life were both based upon and revolved around two 'miracles', the triumphant daily rebirth of the sun and the triumphant annual rebirth of the river. It was these two 'miracles' which conferred upon Egypt a greater fertility of soil and a consequent continuing material prosperity than any other nation could claim. It is not difficult to see how the infallible regularity with which these two events occurred was regarded as divine confirmation that, with equal infallibility, life would succeed death and that the land and people of Egypt enjoyed divine favour above all others. From them arose the twin cult of the Sun-god and Osiris, the divine son of Isis whose death and rebirth reflected the religious aspirations of all Egyptians. But the circumstances of Egyptian life were not conducive to mental stimulation; a pleasanter existence than the one Egyptians were able to enjoy in their earthly life, with its luxurious, divinely given and divinely renewed abundance, great cities and splendid temples, presided over by a god-Pharaoh, was beyond their powers of imagination. The Egyptian Hereafter, therefore, for all the attention that was paid to it, was very little more than a perpetuation of the more comfortable aspects of a prosperous earthly existence.

In line with this ideology, religious art was representational and, in so far as the ordinary Egyptian was concerned, generally realistic. Size was used as an expression of divinity, but representations of god-Pharaohs and their fellow divinities were principally characterised by an overwhelming sense of impersonality and, as a general rule, an absence of any quality of idealism. The ceremonial practice of Egyptian religion was in the hands of a strongly entrenched and powerful priesthood. They alone held, and jealously kept, the keys to the sacred mysteries, and they ensured that no ordinary mortal might communicate with the divine powers other than through their agency.

Self-sufficient and self-centred, the direct influence of the civilisation of Ancient Egypt beyond its frontiers was small in relation to its own greatness and to the contributions of its contemporaries. An arrogant disinclination to learn made the Egyptians bad teachers. In, for instance, its doctrine of a resurrection, Egypt made an important contribution to a basic religious concept, but it had to be interpreted and conveyed to

other peoples through such intermediaries as the Jews and the Alexandrian Greeks, and perhaps also, though to a lesser extent, through their Syrian vassals during the Egyptian imperialistic phase.

The university of Alexandria, the centre of neo-Platonic philosophy, was essentially Greek; nevertheless, it flourished significantly in its Egyptian environment, that, after the rise of Parthia, included the principal trade routes between the Mediterranean and India. Alexandria's importance as a clearing station of ideas was immense, and it is difficult to exaggerate the value of the links which its university and its markets jointly maintained between Hellenism and the civilisations of India. Perhaps Egypt's most important contribution to Christianity was monasticism. Although almost certainly inspired by the example of Buddhism in India, the credit for the Christian evolution of this powerful movement belongs very largely to the Egyptian Church.

Eastern Anatolia, Northern Syria and Northern Mesopotamia

In sharp contrast with Egypt, this geographically indeterminate area straddled important highways of the Ancient World. Around it, and with close contacts, were the Aegean states, the Caucasus and Armenia, Iran, Mesopotamia and Syria. Such a region was fated to be inhabited by a mixed and changing population; but two peoples, above all the others, were jointly responsible for its most constructive contribution to the early Christian era, in spite of the fact that both disappeared from history about the eighth century B.C. These were the Hurri, grouped mainly in northern Mesopotamia, and the Hittites, a confederacy of tribes, whose territory extended from northern Syria across the whole of eastern Anatolia. Although militarily the weaker, usually subject to some more powerful race, and imitators rather than originators, the Hurri were culturally the stronger of the two, and, in matters of religion and social progress, their influence played a key part in the development of the powerful Hittite civilisation.

It was in the supernatural forces of the weather that the Hurri-Hittites found their supreme deities. One was Teshub, the Weather-god, a divine personification of the mountain storms. 'In Syrian art he often stands alone, wielding an axe and a symbolic flash of lightning; in Anatolia itself he drives in a primitive kind of chariot drawn by bulls over the heads of personified mountains.'[1] Teshub's consort was Hebat, the Sun-goddess. Sometimes one, sometimes the other was accorded primacy, a situation which significantly reflected the position of women in Hurrian civilisation. Bound together with Hebat's queenly attributes was an even more fundamental association with the conception of the Great Mother Goddess, the deified personification of the maternal, creative and reproductive powers of the earth.

Throughout the Hurri-Hittite period we see a general tendency to assimilate the attributes of subordinate and local gods into the characters of the two principal divinities. The many minor deities on record included, however, some of an unusually ethical nature; among them, gods of justice, righteous dealing and sincerity — uncommon attributes of gods in the latter part of the second and the beginning of the first millennium B.C. Another exceptional feature of Hurri-Hittite religion was its insistence upon sincere and contrite confession of sins. Man's misfortunes might arise either from his having done wrong, thus offending the gods and calling their punishment upon him, or they might be caused by the activities of evil spirits. If the former, he had to obtain divine forgiveness through penitent confession, purification and sacrifice; if the latter, he must defeat the evil spirits with the help of magic charms.

It was a cardinal feature of the Hurri-Hittite religion that not even the king enjoyed any form of immunity from its laws. Kingship was conferred by the nation, not by the gods. The first duty of the king was that of high priest, and in the carrying out of his priestly functions no Hittite monarch permitted himself illusions of divinity or regarded himself as anything but the representative of his people.

Too little is yet known of Hurri-Hittite religious art for very dependable conclusions to be drawn, but a general tendency towards representation of deities in relief rather than in the round may perhaps be noted. The curtain was rung down upon the Hurri-Hittite

[1] O. R. Gurney, *The Hittites* (Harmondsworth, 2nd edition, 1954), p. 134.

civilisation by the rising power of Assyria; but fortunately this left undestroyed a truly remarkable and enduring legacy, which modern research is only now enabling us to begin to appreciate. One of its heirs was early Greek religion, which drew to a considerable extent upon subjects of Anatolian origin. The cults of Dionysus, of the Samothracian Cabiri, Cybele-Rhea the Earth and Great Mother Goddess of the ancient Greeks, and Demeter all had deep roots in Asia Minor. It is significant, too, that in the early centuries of Christianity, it was the identical region of northern Mesopotamia, northern Syria and Cappadocian Anatolia, that once more provided leadership in the development and propagation of so many of the principles its population had pioneered in the Ancient World a thousand years before.

Persia

With the rise of the Achaemenian dynasty in the sixth century B.C., Persia succeeded to a joint inheritance of the Iranian empire of the Medes and the ancient, highly developed civilisations of the Mesopotamian plain. This fusion of military, political and social genius rapidly established the Persian Empire as a world force rivalled only by the city-states of Greece. Although Alexander's conquest of Persia conferred upon Hellenism a brief supremacy, gradually the military, social and ideological forces of Persia made their recovery. In 248 B.C., less than a century after Alexander's victory over Darius, a successful Parthian revolt restored Persia's independence and in 129 B.C. a further victory expelled the authority of the Macedonian Seleucids to the Syrian banks of the Euphrates. Earlier a subject people of the Achaemenian Persians, the Parthians belonged to the northern edge of the Iranian plateau and consequently possessed close links with the Scythian nomads of the southern Asian steppes. Despite this origin, the rise of Parthia represented, in fact, a national Persian reaction against the foreign influence of Hellenism, which was visualised as the corrupter of the country's brave traditions of independence. For the next four centuries one of the world's leading military powers, Parthia barred any spread farther eastwards of direct Hellenistic influence, whether it appeared under a Seleucid or a Roman standard, and provided a shield behind which the Persian nation gathered its strength for the massive counter-attack, ideological as well as military, which was to be launched by the Sassanian dynasty. The wars of the fifth, sixth and early seventh centuries between the Byzantine and the Sassanian empires were in all their fundamentals a renewal of the ancient, still unsolved, Greco-Persian rivalry.

Throughout the centuries, however, and irrespective of the military situation, the different ideologies of the two great civilisations had been intermingling. The deeply rooted culture of the Orient, of which Achaemenian Persia had assumed the leadership, had profoundly affected the Greco-Macedonian conquerors and the impact was magnified by the essentially Greek characteristic of intellectual curiosity and the limitless Greek capacity for absorbing, adapting and adopting new ideas.

This proved of particular importance in matters of religion. The religion of the Achaemenian Persians and the art that interpreted its ideology sprang predominantly from the savage grandeur of the mountain ranges and harsh desert wastes of the Iranian plateau. The Achaemenian kings were 'great kings', and 'kings of kings'. More than this, as part of their Mesopotamian inheritance, they were the divinely appointed, earthly representatives of the gods. Every opportunity was taken to emphasise these Achaemenian qualities of superhuman greatness and divine perpetuity in the moments they left to posterity, both in the inscribed texts and in the massive hierarchic scale of their likenesses carved on mountain faces. All that they turned their minds and hands to, whether creation or destruction, was commensurate with their claim to superhuman, semi-divine dignity. The principal monuments that have been left to us of Achaemenian art are the ruins of immense royal palaces and great rock tombs, constructed high up the sides of mountains, their façades modelled upon the façades of these same palaces. It was at the majestic portals of his palace that the Persian king revealed himself to his mortal subjects, and it was through similar carved portals that the dead king entered his mountain tomb on his way to appear before the gods. Achaemenian religious sculpture, particularly that displayed on the rock tombs, was essentially carving in relief, for no

mortal being but the king, at his death, might approach the gods.

The supreme god was Ahuramazda, the creator of heaven and earth. At Ahuramazda's delegation the Achaemenian king governed his dominions. Below this deity were divine personifications of the elements, the sun, the moon, earth, fire, water and the wind. The ritual worship and the sacrifices to these gods were in the hands of a priestly class, the Magi, whom the Persians inherited from the Medes. Early in the Achaemenian period and more or less contemporary with the rise of Buddhism in India, this religion underwent a gradual transformation into a new, more ethical and monotheistic form, known, after its founder, as Zoroastrianism, or Mazdaism. In this, Ahuramazda became the deification of the forces of good, engaged in ceaseless struggle with those of evil.

The Persian conception of kingship as a divinely conferred appointment to rule not only Persia but the world was of immense significance to the development of subsequent religious thought. L'Orange remarks, 'the kingdoms in the Ancient Near East mirrored the rule of the sun in the heavens. The king amongst his vassals and satraps was a reflection of the heavenly hierarchy. The king was "The Axis and Pole of the World". In Babylonian cult the king was "The Sun of Babylon", "The King of the Universe", "The King of the Four Quadrants of the World", and these titles were repeated in ever new adaptations right up to the Sassanian period when the king was the "frater Solis et Lunae".'[1]

Though the king never formally assumed the mantle of divinity during his earthly existence, the tradition developed of rendering him the conventional attributes of his impending apotheosis as an integral part of court and religious ceremonial. One aspect of this lay in the gradual development of the identification of the king with the sun, which he was held to personify. This conception was adopted in the Roman Empire by Nero as part of the process of his deification. Later emperors, including Caracalla, Alexander Severus, Constantius II, Constans, Valens, and Honorius, copied his example and represented themselves thus on their coinage. The symbol is even echoed in early Christian art. It is to be found, for instance, in the early third-century Roman mosaic of Christ-Helios driving a horse-drawn sky chariot, and in a similar, end-fourth-century mosaic in the chapel of S. Aquilino, in the church of S. Lorenzo, Milan.

More important, because of its wider and more enduring acceptance into Christian iconography, was the Persian convention of representing the king enthroned upon a round clipeus or shield, signifying the cosmos, of which reputedly he was the supreme and divinely appointed ruler. Winged creatures held this aloft. Sometimes these might have human forms; sometimes they might represent real or mythical beasts, or birds. Three examples of the adoption of this convention by the early Christian Church have survived in Thessalonica. In the apex of the dome of St George can be seen the remains of an end-fourth-century mosaic depicting four angels supporting a circular clipeus containing a luxuriant wreath of flowers, foliage and fruits. In the centre of this, now almost entirely lost, appeared a representation of Christ. The second example, also in St George, on the tympanum of the ciborium of Mosaic Panel No. 7 (Pl. 20*b*) shows the bust of Christ in a clipeus or medallion held aloft by two angels. The third, dated about a century later, is the mosaic showing the visions of Ezekiel and Habakkuk in the apse of the small church of Hosios David. Christ appears enthroned in the centre of a circular clipeus, now transformed into a translucent double rainbow. Emerging from behind the clipeus, but no longer supporting it, are four creatures, here developed into the symbols of the evangelists. With the later evolution of the Byzantine 'cross-in-square' church the four attendants, portrayed realistically as the four evangelists, take their place in the pendentives of the dome of which Christ Pantocrator occupies the apex. Here, it is interesting to note, they have returned to the position — architecturally — of supporters. To-day, the Oriental cosmic clipeus that originally signified the impending apotheosis of the ancient Persian Cosmocrator still figures in Byzantine iconography. It is found in such scenes as the Dormition, the Transfiguration, the Judgement Day and the Ascension, where, although Christ is appearing to men, emphasis is placed upon His assumption of divinity rather than upon His earthly life.

[1] H. P. L'Orange, *Studies on the Iconography of Cosmic Kingship in the Ancient World* (Oslo, 1953), p. 13.

The anti-Hellenistic foreign policy of the Parthian Empire did not imply the complete cessation of the ancient caravan trade that, particularly after the Macedonian conquest, had crossed Mesopotamia and Iran to and from the Mediterranean in the west and India, Sinkiang and China in the east. This traffic was too valuable a source of income and foreign goods for the Parthians to interrupt it entirely. Yet transit facilities for merchants became more difficult and, in the case of nationals of rival powers, were probably wholly withdrawn. Greek could no longer deal with Greek as he passed from one Hellenistic city to another between Macedonia and India. For centuries to come, the great bulk of the traffic that passed between East and West, in ideas as well as in goods, had perforce to be handled by Arab or Jewish middlemen.

However, apart from their opposition to Hellenistic 'imperialism', the Parthians were distinguished by their toleration. Even Hellenism was permitted rein, as long as it was an indigenous Hellenism and served the purposes of the state. The main Parthian religion seems to have been worship of the triad, Ahuramazda, Mithra and Anahita, and in all fundamentals it was an historical continuation of that of the Achaemenian Empire. Parthian subjects also enjoyed full freedom to worship other gods of their choice. Consequently, throughout the Parthian Empire, and particularly in Mesopotamia, Christianity was able to develop in circumstances of peace and legality while, beyond the Euphrates in the Roman Empire, it was suffering at least restriction, and often outright persecution.

In art and architecture Parthia was the forerunner of its more brilliant Sassanian successor, which replaced it in the first half of the third century A.D. Parthian art was of necessity sterner than Sassanian. Its artists were needed to play their part in the rebuilding of the Persian state in face of the seductive influences of international Hellenism. They were not, therefore, primarily concerned with beauty of form. They represented their kings and gods as heavy, powerful, static and hierarchic figures. In a land where gods of so many kinds and forms competed, representation could no longer be limited to relief. Parthian architects demonstrated the inexpugnable influence of Hellenism by their free use of sculpture in the round. Neverthe-

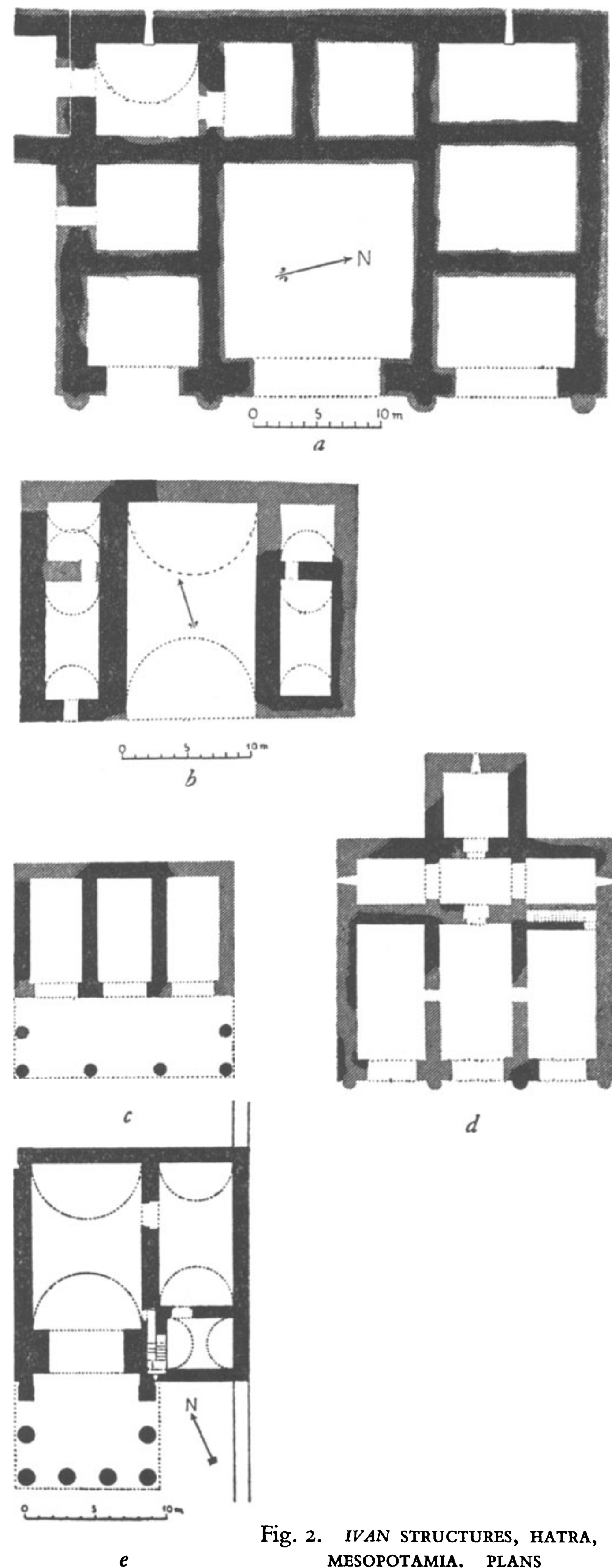


Fig. 2. *IVAN* STRUCTURES, HATRA, MESOPOTAMIA. PLANS

less the frontality which is such a strong characteristic of Parthian art reflected an ancient Iranian form. And, as can be seen from the excavations at Dura-Europos, this frontality appeared in Christian churches and Jewish synagogues as well as in pagan temples.

In addition to the Mesopotamian house, which with its courtyard was the traditional plan of the western Parthian provinces, Parthian architecture developed the Iranian type of *ivan* house, with three chambers opening on to a hall or courtyard. The central chamber was usually larger than those on either side and had a wider opening that often extended from wall to wall (Fig. 2). It was a form of architecture particularly suited to a palace, enabling the king to hold ceremonial audiences in the central bay, his attendants and service rooms to either side, while the public stood in the main hall or courtyard. Evolved originally from the entrances of the tents of the Irano-Scythian nomads, it was another aspect of the Persian city gate and the royal portals of the Achaemenian palaces. It became the common form of public ceremonial hall in Parthia and, under the Sassanians, it reached its culminating point in the magnificent, sixth-century palace at Ctesiphon (Pl. 18*d*, Fig. 3). It is not surprising that with such

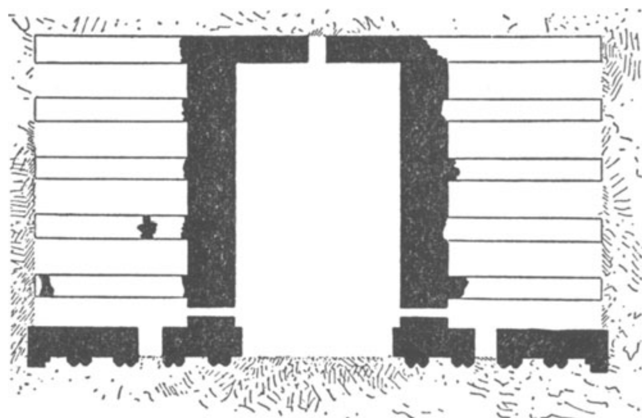


Fig. 3. SASSANIAN PALACE AT CTESIPHON, MESOPOTAMIA. PLAN

long traditions the Persian Christian Church should adapt the *ivan* form to its own purposes and should thus endeavour to render to the King of Heaven no less honour than the pagans rendered the King of Kings.

The ruined examples of Parthian palaces that can still be seen to-day give little impression of their one-time splendour. Strabo (*circa* 63 B.C.–A.D. 25) remarked that many houses about the Bay of Naples were constructed after the model of Persian royal dwellings, but, except possibly as small details on Pompeian landscape paintings, little trace has been found of these seaside Roman villas. Nevertheless, Strabo's comment may well be reflected in the architectural details to be seen in the last phase of Pompeii's decorative art. These, with their close parallels to the architectural façades represented in the dome of St George in Thessalonica, are characterised by an exotic fantasy and luxuriance of ornament that is undoubtedly Asiatic for, however much they may follow a temporary fashion of the Roman court and aristocracy, they are quite foreign to the genuine traditions of the Roman world. In retrospect, the glamour and attraction of Parthian Persia appears dim beside that exerted by its Sassanian successors, but, none the less, to a steadily increasing degree its influence was casting a spell over almost every phase of contemporary Roman life.

India

In the third century B.C., Asoka, the great Buddhist ruler of the Maurya Empire of India, recorded in his rock and pillar edicts that he had despatched missions to the Hellenistic kingdoms of Antiochos Theos of Syria and western Asia, Ptolemy Philadelphos of Egypt, Magas of Cyrene and Antigonos Gonatas of Macedonia. Their activities apparently included preaching the Buddhist faith as well as ordinary diplomacy; but, in spite of Greek interest in Oriental ideas, Asoka's envoys seem to have made little impression. Their message was not, in fact, very sensational. The early Buddhism of Asoka's time proclaimed no new god, no powerful saviour able to promise his followers a paradise after death, no mysterious rites or fields for metaphysical enquiry. Instead, the Greeks must have viewed it as a rather tedious and impracticable code of moral behaviour. In schools such as those of the Stoics, the Epicureans and the Cynics, the Greeks had already formulated other conclusions, and against such strong native opposition Buddhism stood little chance. Those, on the other hand, whom the Greek schools failed to satisfy were even less likely to find their answer in the message from India, the more so since

Buddhism had yet to evolve an anthropomorphic art, and the symbols it was using were too essentially Indian to make headway in the Hellenic, or even Hellenistic lands. There is no evidence that at this stage Greece or Macedonia were influenced by Indian ideas to any perceptible degree.

Nor did Hellenic culture make any noticeable impression upon Maurya India. As soon as Chandragupta, the first of the Maurya rulers, had succeeded in driving the Macedonian forces of Seleucus Nicator north of the Hindu Kush range, he welcomed diplomatic, cultural and commercial relations with his Hellenistic neighbour, and accepted a Syrian princess as his wife. Nevertheless, in Maurya art and architecture it was conquered Persia and not victorious Greco-Macedonia which proved the stronger formative influence from abroad. The ruins of the palace of Asoka, Chandragupta's grandson, at Pataliputra reveal close resemblances with those of the Achaemenian palace at Persepolis, and Megasthenes, the contemporary Seleucid ambassador to the Maurya court, compares its splendours with those of Susa and Ecbatana. Asoka's use of rock and pillar edicts, an important factor in carrying out his religious and social policies, was similarly a borrowing from Persia and Mesopotamia. Perhaps to an even greater degree than the Macedonians, the Indians became pupils in the arts of civilisation to the Persia that had been only temporarily absorbed within the boundaries of the Hellenistic world. But for India's steadfast allegiance to Buddhism and earlier indigenous beliefs, the penetration of Persian influence must have been still deeper and longer lasting.

Thus, mainly through common injections of the stimuli of Persian civilisation, India was brought into cultural step with the east Mediterranean region. This process, beginning some two and a half centuries before the birth of Christ, cannot but have eased the way of any subsequent cultural exchanges. Although slow in taking effect, it proceeded with an impetus that was diverted neither by the Roman conquest of the Hellenistic world, nor by the advent of the Scythian Kushan rulers in India. One example of significant parallel developments in religious art was the universality of the chariot-drawn symbol of the Sun-god or, in the Hittite version, the Weather-god. As an expression of the Sun-god it was used in fifth-century B.C. Greece. In the early Christian era, besides the Roman imperial and Christian examples already noted on page 9, we find it in a first-century representation of Zeus Theos in a Parthian temple at Dura-Europos, and in the third- or fourth-century wall painting of the Hindu Sun-god Surya at Bamiyan. It was certainly not new at this period in India for it appears also several hundred years earlier at Bhaja and Bodh-Gaya.

The important direct contribution made by Hellenism to the religious art of India did not begin until nearly a century after the death of Alexander. When the Parthian conquest of Persia had driven a wedge between Seleucid Syria and the easternmost Hellenistic states, the isolation of the latter forced them to merge with the civilisation of India. It was then, under the Kushan dynasty, that they produced the Indo-Hellenistic, Gandhara sculptures and gave to Buddhism here, and perhaps at Mathura, its anthropomorphic art.

Yet, although the cultural and, in particular, the religious paths of western and eastern Hellenism, with their respective extensions into the Roman and Kushan empires, travelled on parallel lines rather than in association, they still followed remarkably similar courses. Contemporary with the beginnings of Christianity a new form of Buddhism had been taking shape. Without doubt this Mahayana Buddhism owed much to the same Hellenistic influences that had been responsible for evolving Gandhara art, and the parallels are many between its Indo-Hellenistic synthesis and the contemporary Jewish-Hellenistic religion of Christianity, although in their evolution the latter suffered a two and a half to three centuries' handicap of official repression within the Roman Empire. From being little more than a moral code of limited practical application, Buddhism now evolved into a universal religion. No longer simply an ascetic moral teacher, the Buddha was now transformed into a god, like Brahma, an Absolute, who had been before all worlds and whose existence was eternal. His appearance on earth and Nirvana were explained as a device for the comfort and conversion of men.[1]

The practically simultaneous Christian and Bud-

[1] B. Rowland, *The Art and Architecture of India* (Harmondsworth, 1954), p. 32.

dhist answer of nearly two thousand years ago to civilised mankind's demand for a saviour-god proved to possess a world-wide application. Westwards, Christian missionaries took their message as far as the distant isles of Britain; eastwards, Buddhists travelled with theirs to convert the ancient empire of China, where, later, they were followed by the Nestorian Christians of Mesopotamia and Persia. Inevitably, in time the two religions diverged, but it is significant that the causes of this were less the physical problems of distance and difficulties of communications than the physical and moral havoc that the great waves of barbarian invasions brought, in various degrees, to the civilisations of Europe, south-western Asia and China in the early centuries of the Christian era.

Mahayana Buddhism and its Indo-Hellenistic art continued to flourish in Gandhara until the catastrophic invasion of the White Huns in the sixth century, while, from A.D. 50 until 320, southern India prospered under the brilliant rule of the later Andhra dynasty. During the early centuries of this period, when for most of the time Christianity was a proscribed religion in the Roman Empire, a very considerable trade was in existence between the eastern Mediterranean and India. Most of this, though not all, as we are aware from the anonymous *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*, compiled during the first half of the first century A.D., was in the hands of Arab middlemen.

It is not difficult to see an affinity between Buddhist thought and the ideologies of such religious sects as the Jewish Essenes or the Therapeutae of Alexandria, but that the penetration of Buddhist ideas into the eastern Mediterranean was not confined to the more esoteric groups receives a remarkable demonstration in Josephus' account of the final Jewish stand against the Romans in the fortress of Massada in A.D. 70. The Jewish leader, Eleazar, proposes that, in view of the hopelessness of their struggle, they should first kill their wives and children to prevent them falling into Roman hands and follow this act with a mass suicide. In support of his argument Josephus quotes Eleazar as saying:

> 'Yet if we do stand in need of foreigners to support us in this path, let us regard those Indians who profess the example of philosophy, for these good men do but unwillingly undergo the time of life, and look upon it as a necessary servitude and make haste to let their souls loose from their bodies; nay, when no misfortune presses them to it, nor drives them upon it, these have such a desire of a life of immortality, that they tell other men beforehand that they are about to depart, and nobody hinders them but every one thinks them happy men, and gives them letters to be carried to their familiar friends (that are dead); so firmly and certainly do they believe that souls converse with one another (in the other world). So when these men have heard all such commands that were to be given them, they deliver their body to the fire; and in order to their getting their soul a separation from the body, in the greatest purity, they die in the midst of hymns of commendations made to them; for their dearest friends conduct them to their death more readily than do any of the rest of mankind conduct their fellow citizens when they are going a very long journey, who, at the same time weep on their own account, but look upon the others as happy persons, as so soon to be made partakers of the immortal order of beings. Are we not, therefore, ashamed to have lower notions than the Indians?'[1]

This reference to Indian philosophy and precedents at a time of such dire crisis is an extraordinary testimonial to the hold which India must have exerted upon the thought and imagination of a people whose ramifications extended throughout the Mediterranean world, and it is noteworthy that the Massada incident occurred within less than two decades of St Paul's journeys to Macedonia and within three-quarters of a century of the Jewish Diaspora. That this influence was neither superficial nor ephemeral is confirmed by the seventh- or eighth-century document of 'John the Monk', giving, in the history of Barlaam and Josaphat, a Christian version of the life of Buddha, 'a history which is good for the soul . . . transferred from the country of the Indians'. It seems a reasonable probability that the story which was set down in writing by John the Monk, and enjoyed widespread and lasting popularity, was no new import from seventh-century India, but one that had long been current in his native Palestine. Of even greater significance is the relationship between the apophatic or negative theology propounded by the 'Pseudo Dionysius the Areopagite' and the Buddhist doctrine of Nirvana.

[1] Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, Book VII, chap. viii. Trans. by W. Whiston.

In the sphere of art, we shall consider the possible influence of Indian ideas in the expression on the face of Christ in the apse mosaic in the Thessalonian church of Hosios David (Pl. 48) in Chapter 9, Section 14. Three other, perhaps less significant, examples of artistic interrelation may be briefly quoted. The 'Psamatia' Christ, which appears on a fragment of a sarcophagus from Asia Minor, is remarkably similar, both in posture and technique of presentation, to contemporary representations of standing Buddhas.[1] In a third-century mosaic floor at Aquileia is a bust of an 'Indian boxer'. A fifth- or sixth-century mosaic in St Demetrius at Thessalonica depicting a child being presented to the saint has two trees in the background; both are shaped in the form of a three-tiered 'umbrella', the Indian symbol of the tree or axis of the universe which appears in an identical form at the apex of the stupa at Sanchi (Pl. IV and Fig. 4).



Fig. 4. APEX OF THE GREAT STUPA, SANCHI, INDIA

Lastly, but by no means least, may be cited the tremendous influence of monasticism on the development of early Christianity. The Christian version spread to Europe and western Asia from Egypt, but, as has already been pointed out, Egypt must almost certainly have obtained its original inspiration from Buddhist India. The possibility that a Buddhist influence continued to be expressed in western monasticism for some centuries is not to be disregarded.

The Semitic Peoples of Mesopotamia, Syria and Arabia

It is one of the most stubborn facts of history that despite endless and often violent divisions, the Semitic peoples have continued to maintain a fundamental unity. Even the great Jewish Diaspora of the second century A.D., a movement which gave the Jews unparalleled international connections and even deep roots in other lands, did not succeed in separating them from their historic homeland in western Asia. Similarly, for all the apparent differences between the urban Arab and his nomadic brothers, and however each may look down upon the other, the underlying concepts of both are identical. Right up to our own day the (now finally disappearing) sternly puritanical Semite of the desert has retained an ultimate moral ascendancy and, when the urban Semite has strayed too far from his old traditions, eventually his desert brother has descended upon him and ruthlessly purged him of his 'impurities'.

To establish the fundamental Semitic tradition, therefore, we must consider the conceptions and way of life of the Semitic peoples beyond the cities. Broadly, there were two categories; the pastoral nomad, leading a tribal existence among the unproductive desert and semi-desert wastes of Syria and Arabia, and the caravaning or seafaring trader. The latter, in fact, by virtue of his commercial contacts was already beginning the first stage of the process of urbanisation.

Their environments the vast emptiness of the desert and ocean, such people led an austere, even harsh existence, physically and mentally governed by the scorching heat of the sun by day and the cold moonlit and starry expanses of the sky by night. There was time for thinking, time for conversation and the relating of tales, time for theological speculation and contemplation of the Absolute; but little opportunity for the enjoyment of material possessions and refinements. The architecture of adherents of a civilisation of this nature was unlikely to prolificate archaeological remains, for their temples were not houses they had fashioned themselves, but the divinely erected and divinely appointed sky. If an object of particularly sacred associations needed a sanctuary, the means at hand was a portable, ceremonial tent, designed as closely as possible on the lines of the great sky dome. Their religious art was abstract and essentially nonrepresentational. It was characterised by an emphasis on geometrical design and a passion for filling in every

[1] B. Rowland, Jnr., *Art in East and West* (Harvard, 1954). Figures 15 and 16 show a particularly interesting comparison between the Psamatia Christ and a third/fourth-century Buddha in the Museum of Kabul.

possible inch of space with symbols of good, lest the evil forces that inhabited the great expanses of the unknown might suddenly materialise and cause harm, as they too often did, in the shape of tempests, disease, famine and enemy tribes, in the people's daily lives. Only when the Semites attained an urban existence did their worship include representational forms, as happened, for instance, in the case of the 'golden calf' of the Israelites. The true sacred object of the Israelites was the Ark of the Covenant, a wooden chest containing the tablets of the Law. Similarly, the prototype of Dhu-el-Shara, the chief god of the Nabatean Arabs of Petra, was a rectangular block of stone, in all probability a similar object to the sacred Kaaba worshipped in Mecca to-day.

A way of life appropriate to seafarers or pastoral nomads could not be fitted easily into a different context. The Semitic peoples who spread into agricultural areas, and traders who made their homes in foreign cities or the busy entrepôts that grew up at the intersection of caravan routes, had to adapt themselves to an urban life. In so doing, there was a natural tendency to adopt the customs of their more sophisticated neighbours. Their gods might remain more or less the same as those worshipped by their desert ancestors, but a tent or an open space appeared a mean, ignoble form of sanctuary beside the resplendent temples dedicated to the foreign gods. If, in copying such structures as these temples, a symbol of the great sky temple also was needed, a small but beautifully wrought dome or ciborium above the altar sufficed. Intermittently, in the effort to combat the lure of alien religions, Semitic abstract religious art gave way to representational forms. As can be seen in the synagogue excavated at Dura-Europos, in the third century A.D. some Jewish communities had even relaxed their scruples to the extent of covering the walls of synagogues with religious pictures to meet the competition of Christianity, and doubtless other religions such as Mithraism.

Nevertheless, however much the urbanised Semite might compromise in matters of form and method, wherever he went and wherever he stayed, he maintained with remarkably little change the fundamental identity of himself and his religion. As a result of this neutral identity in a divided world, the Semitic trader retained his ability to buy in India what he could sell in Egypt, in Mesopotamia what he could sell in Rome. When the rise of Parthia put an end to the full 'internationalism' of Hellenism, it was he who replaced the Greek as the common denominator of the civilised world, and by virtue of this, continued to a very large degree the henotheistic impetus of Alexander.

In art and architecture, the urban, international Semites were carriers and adaptors rather than creators of original forms. It was an invaluable and, indeed, for the Christian civilisation of Europe and western Asia, an indispensable role; for what the Semitic trader conveyed from one land to another was, ultimately, the expression of ideals. Discussing the art of the Arab city of Palmyra, Rostovtzeff provides us with a clue to the perpetuation into Christianity of the ethical ideals of the Hurri-Hittites centuries after their civilisation had, apparently, disappeared.

> The sculpture of Palmyra represented by hundreds of busts and bas-reliefs, showing figures of gods and men and ritual scenes, presents in the treatment of the heads and bodies such softness and lack of vigour, such helplessness in modelling the limbs of a human body, such inclination towards the pictorial element and the minute rendering of details of dress and furniture (peculiarities which are entirely foreign to Greek sculpture and are typical of the eastern plastic art in general), that we can hardly call this sculpture Greek or Graeco-Roman. If we look for affinities we shall see that the nearest parallels to Palmyrene sculptures will be found not so much in Babylonia, in Assyria, or in Persia, as in the north Semitic countries and in Anatolia, in the art which has been quite recently revealed by archaeological investigation of north Syria and Anatolia and which we call by the general name of Hittite. Such sites as Sendjirli, Carchemish, and Tell Halaf with their hundreds of statues and bas-reliefs show, in spite of the long stretch of time which separates them from the earlier Palmyrene sculptures, unmistakable affinities with Palmyrene plastic art. We may say, without being in danger of misleading the reader, that the sculpture of Palmyra is the Hellenised offspring of Aramaean and Anatolian plastic art.[1]

The architecture of Petra tells a slightly different story but one that follows similar lines. The original homeland of the Nabateans, according to their own traditions, lay to the south of Petra, almost certainly

[1] M. Rostovtzeff, *Caravan Cities* (Oxford, 1932), pp. 147-8.

somewhere in the Arabian peninsula. For all the obvious contribution of Hellenistic and Roman art to the style and, in particular, the sculptural decoration of the later monuments, the underlying architectural conception of Petra is Iranian. The earlier temples are devoid of any western influence and, of the later, the Khasne (Pl. 18*b*), one of the most obviously Hellenistic monuments, is the rock tomb of a Nabatean king and still a fundamentally Achaemenian conception.

From the earliest historic period until the sixth and seventh centuries A.D., when a combination of general insecurity and the final breakdown of the Marib dam instigated a large-scale migration northwards and the militancy of Islam brought about the severing of East-West connections, the southern and some of the other coastal regions of the Arabian peninsula were the scene of a flourishing and highly developed civilisation exerting an important impact upon that of the Mediterranean. Excavations at Bahrein in the Persian Gulf are now revealing the advanced standards enjoyed by city trading stations operating the commercial routes between Mesopotamia and the Indus civilisation of India in very early times. In all probability traders of the same south-eastern Arabian cities brought the civilisation of Sumer to the early kingdom of Upper Egypt. Many centuries later the great Spice Route from India to the Mediterranean passed through and enriched the southern Arabian cities, the prosperity of which was further enhanced by the Parthian interruption of the direct overland road crossing northern Mesopotamia, and by the insatiable Roman appetite for the exotic products of the East.

To-day, among the many storied houses of the Hadhramaut one can find the astonishing spectacle of specimens of Dutch architecture, an indication, not of Dutch penetration, but of the fact that Hadhramaut trade has extended as far east as Indonesia and that, as from time immemorial, the southern Arabian trader has brought back to his homeland anything he had found abroad that seemed good to him. The most striking and characteristic architectural features of southern Arabia, however, are the great, well-proportioned, high buildings, whether in use to-day as the twenty-storied castle of Ghomdan in San'a, or in ruins as the ancient dam of Marib. As for their ornamentation, the tenth-century Arab geographer from southern Arabia, al-Hamadani, tells us that one could see 'figures of all kinds sketched upon them; wild and ravening animals . . . eagles with flapping wings and vultures pouncing upon hares . . . herds of gazelles hurrying to their death trap, dogs with drooping ears, partly leashed and partly loose, and a man with a whip, amidst horses'. These are Iranian and Irano-Scythian motives, and, whether received directly or via Byzantium, are one more indication of the powerful influences emanating from Irano-Mesopotamia since remote antiquity.

The Semitic artists were not content merely to copy the art forms of their neighbours, they would employ techniques they had observed in use in other lands. A good example of this, all the clearer for its rather clumsy *naïveté*, appears in the synagogue wall paintings of Dura-Europos executed about A.D. 245. Comparing them with the paintings in the Parthian temple of Zeus Theos, dated a little more than a century earlier, we find again the frontal poses, the gradation of stature according to hierarchic importance, and the verisimilitude of detail combined with lack of individual personality. On the other hand, the static and formalised effect has gone. There is movement, a movement that the painter's brush has only momentarily arrested. Most striking of all is the impression that, for all their *naïveté* and clumsy postures, the figures represent human beings who are acting a story in the present tense. This impression is not even destroyed by the hierarchic nature of some of the paintings. Samuel, in the scene in which he anoints David among the sons of Jesse, stands considerably larger than the rest, but in no way does this appear to give him the stature of a god. The storytelling rather than ritual intention of the paintings is underlined by their narrative styles. In some cases the theme of one of the Jewish sacred books is presented in a series of isolated episodes. In others an attempt is made at a more continuous effect by running several incidents together within a single frame.

These narrative conventions, both of which became prominent features of Byzantine art, were not new to the east Mediterranean world. They had figured in the art of Sumer, ancient Egypt and Phoenicia. Yet, that the Jews of Syro-Mesopotamia went so far back in time for their models is unlikely for, as Rostovtzeff

has convincingly argued,[1] others were to hand. Both narrative forms appeared in second century B.C. Indian sculptures at Bharhut, where companion pieces very clearly display Persian influence, and in the relief carvings decorating the late first-century B.C. gateways of the stupa at Sanchi.[2] Following Rome's expansion into western Asia, the second, or grouped type, became a popular artistic device in the Empire, appearing, for instance, in the early second-century Column of Trajan and, some half-century later, on that of Marcus Aurelius. In the third century, it was used by Christian artists in the Roman catacombs, for example to illustrate the story of Jonah in the cemetery of Callixtus. Both are used in Thessalonica's early fourth-century Arch of Galerius (Pl. 8). But it was only when the Peace of the Church promoted a demand for a popular religious art, and with the removal of the centre of gravity of the Empire to the eastern Mediterranean, that the possibilities of both forms entered upon a new and greater period of exploitation.

Thus, in the realm of ideas, the Semitic contribution to early Christianity and Byzantine civilisation was twofold. Firstly, there was the powerful impetus towards an intellectual monotheism which stemmed from the austere and puritanical nomads of the deserts and voyagers of the seas. Secondly, a task to which they succeeded the Greeks after the rise of Parthia, there was the effective maintenance of free avenues of thought, irrespective of considerations of politics, distance or time; for ideas were carried not only from country to country, but from age to age. It was the latter achievement, much of the credit for which belonged to the urban Semites, which ensured the orderly progression of the Hellenistic world into that of the Byzantine.

In architecture, the original Semitic contribution lay mainly in the ideological conception behind the domed, centralised church (though probably it had but little to do with its technical evolution) which attained a logical end in the domed mosque. In art it gave an emphasis to abstract form and design. An example, showing, incidentally, how strongly imprinted had been the influences of Hellenism, is the ornamental façade of the palace of M'shatta, in Syria. Yet, although Semitic inspiration tended generally to express itself in abstract forms, as Cumont [3] and L'Orange [4] have shown, it is likely to have been responsible for one important detail in the early iconography of Christ — the raised, open, right hand that we find in the apse of Hosios David and elsewhere in the late fourth to sixth centuries. In the books of the Old Testament reference continually occurs to Jehovah's outstretched right hand — to use the Psalmist's words, 'Thou hast a mighty arm: strong is thy hand, and high is thy right hand'.[5] Throughout the Ancient Near East the gesture expressed divine omnipotence. By extension, it could signify salvation or, in the case of an angry god, destruction. But it was essentially a gesture of divinity, to be made only by the god himself or at his delegation, and, as such, was adopted particularly by the Semitic peoples. When King Jeroboam stretched his right hand against one of Jehovah's prophets, it withered.

But, also of no small importance to later ages was what has been termed the 'adaptive' art of the Semitic peoples. Through their continual fertilisation of the art forms of one region or time with those of another, they played an essential part in the stupendous co-operative inter-racial effort which so long maintained the Eastern Mediterranean in its position of world leadership in the arts as well as in the religions of civilisation.

Celts, Scythians and their Successors

Beyond the northern periphery of Alexander's conquests were two other powerful groups of peoples, the Celts and the Scythians. Documentary history has recorded little more than the comments of those who suffered from their destructive raids, but recent research has indicated that the usual Greek and Roman view of the Celts, Scythians and kindred peoples deserves considerable revision. Both groups were pastoral, though warlike, peoples, their social structure tribal; the Celts conditioned by the forests, mountains, fertile plains and rivers of Europe, the Scythians

[1] M. Rostovtzeff, *Dura-Europos and its Art* (Oxford, 1938), chaps. 3 and 4.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] F. Cumont, *Fouilles de Doura Europos* (1926), p. 70 *et seq.*

[4] H. P. L'Orange, *op. cit.* p. 153 *et seq.*

[5] Psalms lxxxix, 13.

by the vast steppelands over which they and their herds moved constantly in nomadic fashion. The Celts, northern neighbours of the Illyrians, undermined the latter's vigorous civilisation by their raids around the fourth century B.C., and thus facilitated the transformation of the Macedonian kingdom into a powerful and ambitious state. Celtic depredations in the southern half of the Balkan peninsula gathered momentum until, in 279 B.C., the tribe of the Galatae succeeded in sacking Delphi, and, the following year, conquered and settled a large part of Asia Minor. That Celtic civilisation reached a high order is no longer in doubt. Modern research has tended to concentrate upon Celtic achievements in western Europe, but the tribes responsible for the sack of Rome in 390 B.C. and who held sway over large areas of eastern Europe and Asia Minor a century later must similarly have exerted a cultural influence to some extent commensurate with their military strength.

St Paul, writing his epistle from Rome to the 'foolish Galatians', admonishes them for 'the works of the flesh which are manifest, which are these: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like; of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God'.[1] St Paul, one feels, might have castigated certain of the contemporary religious and social customs of the pagan western Celts in like terms. The nature and mother goddess worship, fertility cults, belief in magic, sacrifices and orgiastic ceremonies of primitive Celtic religion would not have been easily or quickly lost and evidently the Apostle felt that here was no occasion for mincing words.

St Paul's strictures notwithstanding, the Celts of Asia Minor and western Europe alike proved particularly receptive to Christianity. Can we assume from this that Christianity echoed some fundamental chord in pagan Celtic religion? We have to admit the possibility, and its consequent pertinence to Illyrian reception of St Paul's message of Christianity. Nevertheless, we still know too little at present of the Illyrians and the eastern Celts to assess the impact of the latter upon early Christian Macedonia. The powerful influence of Hellenism would have tended to stifle the more obvious Celtic expressions except in the rural, completely Illyrian regions; but our present ignorance is not necessarily an indication that they were unimportant.

[1] Galatians v, 19-21.

Except in the extreme north-east the Scythians never penetrated, nor in any way dominated the Balkan peninsula. Nevertheless, as powerful north-eastern neighbours of the Thracians, with strong cultural and artistic as well as military traditions, their influence could hardly have been negligible.

They were, Tamara Talbot Rice writes, probably an Indo-European people who worshipped the elements.

> Their main devotions were paid to the Great Goddess, Tabiti-Vesta, the Goddess of Fire and perhaps also of beasts (Fig. 5). She alone figures in their art, presiding at the taking of oaths, administering communion or anointing chieftains. . . . In the Crimea, the Great Goddess is not found much before the ninth century B.C., when she is depicted standing, holding a child in her arms, though she did not then represent the goddess of fertility any more than she ever represented a matriarchy to the Scythians. . . . In Scythian art



Fig. 5. SCYTHIAN GREAT GODDESS, TABITI-VESTA (?), WITH BEASTS. Detail from a gilt and engraved silver mirror found at Kelermes, the Kuban, S. Russia. Probably Greek workmanship

she sometimes appears as half-woman half-serpent, sometimes standing, sometimes seated between her sacred beasts, the raven and dog, or sometimes with an attendant or in conversation with a chieftain.[1] (Pl. 6*c*.)

The elaborate manner of their burial of chieftains, in some areas alone, in others together with a favourite wife and attendants, all richly dressed with valuables, accoutrements, food, wine and domestic utensils — lesser warriors enjoyed simpler interments — indicates a belief in some form of after-life. Always horses accompanied the chieftain to his grave, sometimes as few as six or eight, but in the Kuban the number might range from a score to, in one case, around four hundred.

Again lack of knowledge, this time of Thracian customs, prevents us from making any proper assessment of the degree to which they were influenced by these virile nomadic neighbours. Nevertheless, it was probably considerable. It is likely that the Macedonians, Thessalians and Boeotians received the horse from the Thracians who, in turn, had received it from the Scythians. Certainly the Thracian cult of the mounted Heroic Hunter links religious beliefs of Scythia and Greece. In the Christian period it is perhaps possible still to be able to see a reflection of Scythian influence in the zoomorphic carvings on the pillars of the doorway in the chancel screen of the Basilica of St Demetrius (Pl. 26*c*). Later, a recrudescence of both the Scythian and the Celtic impacts, absorbed and transmuted with much else over the course of hundreds of years into the culture of the Slavs, began in the sixth century. This, however, is beyond the scope of a chapter dealing with Byzantine Macedonia's legacy from the Alexandrian era.

East and West

It would be wrong to make too clear distinctions between the various influences and their origins that bore upon Macedonia and the Mediterranean world from the Orient. Alexander's conquests were only one factor in the mixing and syntheses of peoples and ideas which continued as part of the progressive momentum of civilisation. Persia was a composite empire; India variously affected by such different importations as Persian architecture and Persian social policies, Hellenistic art and Scythian rulers; Greeks, Romans, Celts and Armenians were only four of the many racial groups whose varying fortunes were continually changing the cultural complexion of Asia Minor. Persia's political strength and her ancient civilisations ensured her the dominant position in the Orient, but she both drew from and gave to her neighbours. The political disunity of the Semitic peoples tended to disguise the strength and original nature of their important contributions. Thus although for the sake of simplicity and coherence it is necessary to use such labels as Persian, Indian or Semitic in identifying particular conceptions, it is always essential to remember that the pedigrees of such conceptions were seldom pure and were often extremely mixed.

This point is also important to bear in mind when considering the influence exerted by Antioch and Alexandria. Both were important centres of early Byzantine art, politics, theology, learning and administration. But they were essentially the products of their environments; and the environments of both included, in constantly varying degrees, each other as well as the whole known world. The early Byzantine world was not static, and the importance of such focal cities as Alexandria and Antioch lay more in their role as markets for the exchange of ideas than as schools of original thought. Although both enjoyed a particular ease of access to certain regions of outside influence, such as Antioch to Persia and Alexandria to India, nothing of importance, except a political attitude, that one of these centres developed, imported or copied was likely to remain its exclusive product for long. Not only were the Greeks themselves always interested in something new, and a common factor in every lively minded city, but the Arabs and Jews were able to penetrate regions closed to Greeks. And they moved, constantly, everywhere, always carrying something, ideas as well as objects, to exchange elsewhere. In such circumstances an article made in Antioch may well have derived jointly, for instance, from Iran, Arabia and northern Mesopotamia, and the history of its particular function and design be ages old.

In contrast to the vigorous and deeply rooted traditions pressing from the East, the end of the second

[1] T. Talbot Rice, *The Scythians* (London, 1957), pp. 85-6.

century A.D. saw the early symptoms of a steady deterioration in the strength of the relatively young Latin West. The Asian provinces of the Roman Empire were protected from the barbarian invaders coming from Central Asia by the natural defences of the Iranian plateau, the Caspian Sea, the Caucasian ranges and the Black Sea. Central, southern and western Europe enjoyed no such geographical advantages. For its defence it could only depend upon its armies, and these had come to bear little resemblance to the disciplined forces which had been responsible for creating the Empire. As early as the end of the second century A.D., the élite legions and even the emperors themselves were no longer of Latin stock, so severe a toll had been taken by the combination of material prosperity and the wastage of the noblest Roman families in continual civil or defensive warfare. Roman tradition, however much of the Greek and Oriental it had absorbed, had still the strength to transfer its unique contribution of law and administration to its Byzantine successor; yet, even at the time of the change-over, the main burden of this tradition had ceased to be borne by natives of Rome. In the old capital the discipline that had been the foundation of its greatness no longer existed; with the one all important exception of the small Christian minority. But the concern of these Christians of Rome was with a new and revolutionary future, not with the ancient pagan past.

Yet it would be quite wrong to draw the inference that Rome had a comparatively unimportant share in building the Byzantine Empire. In its imperial phase Rome had been contributing steadily to the social development of its eastern territories and neighbours as well as absorbing much from them. Roman traditions may have gradually depended less and less on natives of Rome itself, but a more important fact was the ability of a Roman emperor to create a New Rome on alien territory, and that from there he and his successors should, for more than a thousand years, continue to govern the Empire of the Romans. That Old Roman forms of religious art and architecture did not maintain themselves in New Rome is not surprising. The old order changed in Old Rome too. The Roman contribution to civilisation was fundamentally civil, not religious. Consequently, the most important of its 'monuments' to maintain their position in the Byzantine continuation were achievements in the sphere of law and administration. The fact that these are less easy to picture, are outside the scope of art historians, and less controversial than religious art, must not mislead us as to their importance in forming the social outlook and, thus, indirectly, the art of the Byzantines. The Byzantine Empire rose from the Orient *and* — not *or* — Rome, a synthesis created by the culture of Greece.

The Greco-Persian wars, which under one guise or another continued into the Middle Ages until outside forces reduced both protagonists to impotence, were perhaps the most spectacular aspect of the development of the eastern Mediterranean region, but they were not the most important. More fundamental was a common search for a universal religious ideal. In this field Greeks and Persians played the roles of major contributing partners rather than adversaries and Alexander took his place as the ideological successor of Cyrus rather than the military conqueror of Persia.

Christianity was the outcome of this common spiritual quest. A new dawn rather than a new world, its deep roots in past ages' accumulation of religious ideals enabled Christianity to convey its philosophy through the language of symbols which the syncretism of Eastern and Western thought had already given universality. Plates 3 and 4 and Figures 5-7 illustrate the widespread use of one basic aspect of this syncretism, the Great Mother Goddess as the symbol of Man's belief in Rebirth and Eternal Life. Comparison with examples in Plate 5 indicates, however, a crucial point where, influenced by Hellenism, Christianity broke decisively with its Oriental ancestry. For Christians Death-Eternal Life had ceased to be regarded with dread. The lions or serpents that had guarded Atargatis, Cybele, Lilith and other Asiatic Mother Goddesses were replaced by doves, peacocks, lambs,

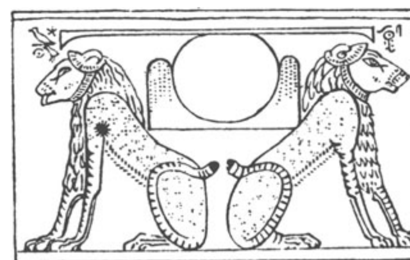


Fig. 6. EGYPTIAN SOLAR DISC WITH LION SUPPORTERS



a. Goddess with Beasts. South Babylonia, *circa* 2,300 B.C. *British Museum*



b. Lilith, Goddess of Death. Sumer, *circa* 2,000 B.C. *Colville Collection*



c. Lion Gate, Mycenae. *Circa* 1,500 B.C.



d. Goddess with Beasts. Beotian, seventh century B.C. *National Museum, Athens*



f. Artemis with Lions. Capua. Hellenic, *circa* 500 B.C. *British Museum*



e. Gorgon with Beasts. Perugia. Etruscan, *circa* 500 B.C. *Antikensammlungen, Munich*



g. Ceres with Snakes and Corn. Magna Graecia. Hellenic. *Museo Nazionale delle Terme, Rome*



a. Atargatis on the Lion Throne and her consort Hadad. Syrian under Anatolian influence. *Art Museum of Yale University*



b. Cybele on the Lion Throne. Stobi, Macedonia. *National Museum, Belgrade*



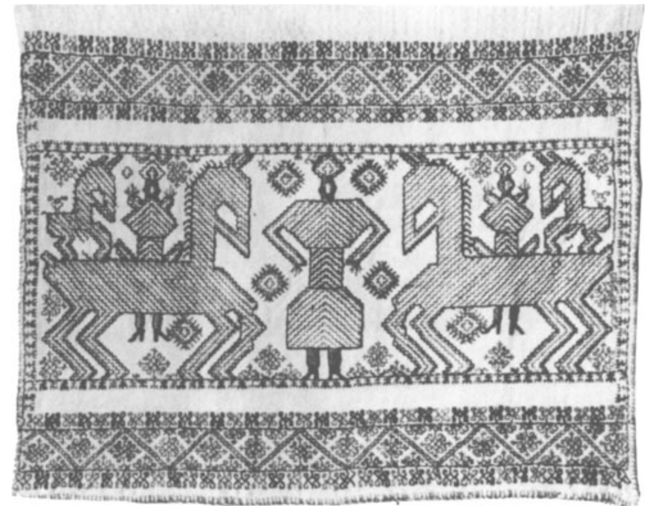
g. Goddess and Birds. Slav. Seventh century bronze fibula. *Historical Museum, Moscow*



c. Artemis and mounted Dioscuri. Pisidia. *Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna*



f. Goddess and Beasts. Slav. Seventh century bronze fibula. *Historical Museum, Moscow*



d. Goddess and Horsemen. Slav. Nineteenth century Russian embroidery of traditional design. *Historical Museum, Moscow*



e. Goddess and attendants. Scythian. *Ashmolean Museum, Oxford*



h. Goddess and Beasts. Slav. Ninth-tenth century bronze fibula. *Historical Museum, Moscow*



i. Goddess and Horsemen. Norwegian. Thirteenth century carving on a wooden episcopal throne. Heddal church, Telemark

4 THE GREAT GODDESS AND THE SOURCE OF ETERNAL LIFE II

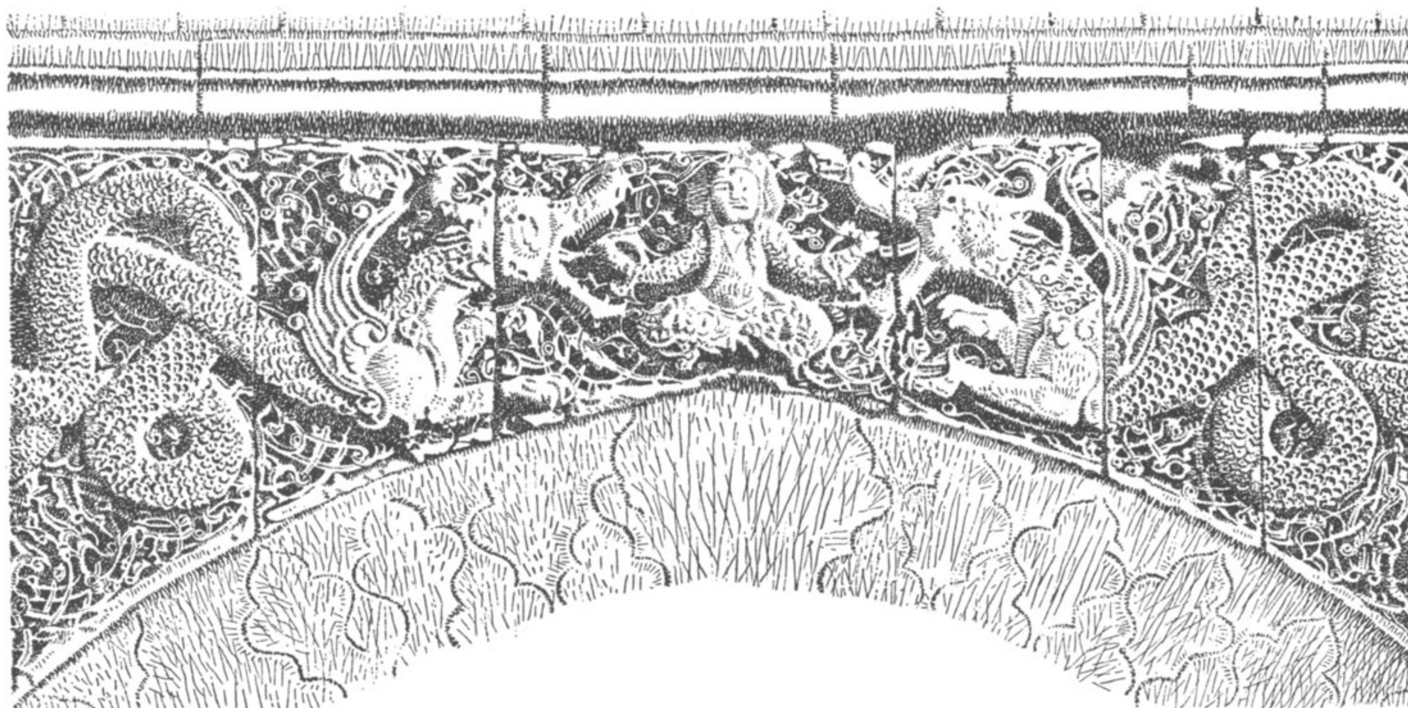


Fig. 7. HUMAN FIGURE FLANKED BY DRAGONS. DETAIL FROM THE TALISMAN GATE, BAGHDAD

the Apostles Peter and Paul, the archangels Michael and Gabriel and, later, by the two arch-interceders for mankind, the Virgin Mary and John the Baptist, as the twin attendants of the Christian figure symbolising the Source of Eternal Life.

Even in the case of Daniel and the Lions, one of the earliest symbols to be used for this purpose by Christianity, the lions have been tamed by the spiritual power represented by Daniel. The terror of Death has been overcome. Earlier, Artemis had physically mastered her lions and Ceres had calmly grasped her serpents. The great contribution made by Hellenism

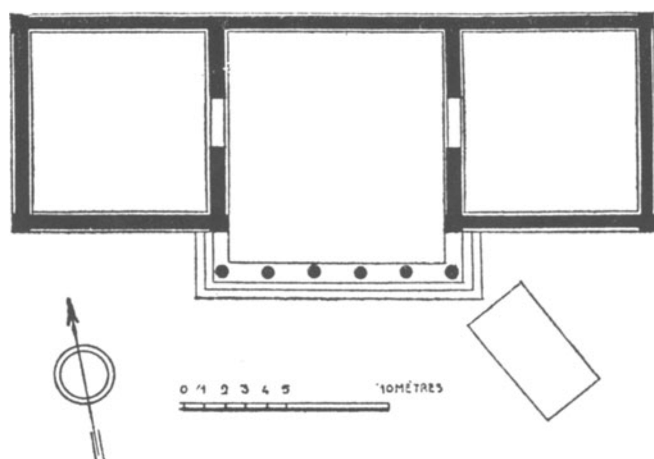


Fig. 8. TRIPARTITE PAGAN SANCTUARY AT SAMOTHRACE
(Reconstructed plan by Chapouthier)

to Christianity is nowhere more graphically illustrated than by the Pignatta sarcophagus in Ravenna. Here Christ, attended by Peter and Paul, is shown resting his feet upon a quiescent lion and serpent (Pl. 5).

The tripartite nature of the symbol, whether pagan or Christian, is of such ancient origin that it would be unwise to do more than note that it appears to be a particularly prominent feature of religions practised by the Indo-European group of peoples. Unquestionably, three, the figure of the Trinity and, in sacred arithmetic, the figure of the soul, reflected a fundamental concept accepted with relatively little dispute by all the leading western Asiatic religions — except the Semitic monotheisms of Judaeism and Islam. As well as in art, Christianity was to make particular use of it in architecture, notably in the form of the tripartite sanctuary (anticipated in pagan Samothrace (Fig. 8) and Hellenistic Syria (Fig. 9)), in trefoil and triple apses, and in the adoption of the basilical nave and aisles.

When within the sphere of Christianity, the old pre-Christian symbols did not always suffer change. The thirteenth-century episcopal chair in the Norwegian church of Heddal carries the image of the Great Goddess flanked by two horsemen (Pl. 4), a common version of the Source of Eternal Life symbol in northern

Europe. In view of this it is not surprising to find it still in use as a traditional embroidery theme in nineteenth-century Russia (Pl. 4). The lions that had accompanied Lilith, Cybele and other Great Goddesses still flanked a fourteenth-century west European Madonna (Pl. 5), and they still crouch fiercely at the feet of the nineteenth-century episcopal throne in the church of St Clement at Ohrid in Macedonia (Pl. 5). Likewise, however, much the dragons on either side of the cross surmounting Orthodox iconostases may speak the language of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Orthodox Christianity (Pl. 5), their syntax illustrates little change from that of the Babylonian bowl of more than four millennia before (Pl. 3) or, indeed, from the mediaeval symbol on the Talisman Gate of Baghdad (Fig. 7). It would be rash indeed to assume that even now these ancient symbols have ceased to hold some subconscious meaning.

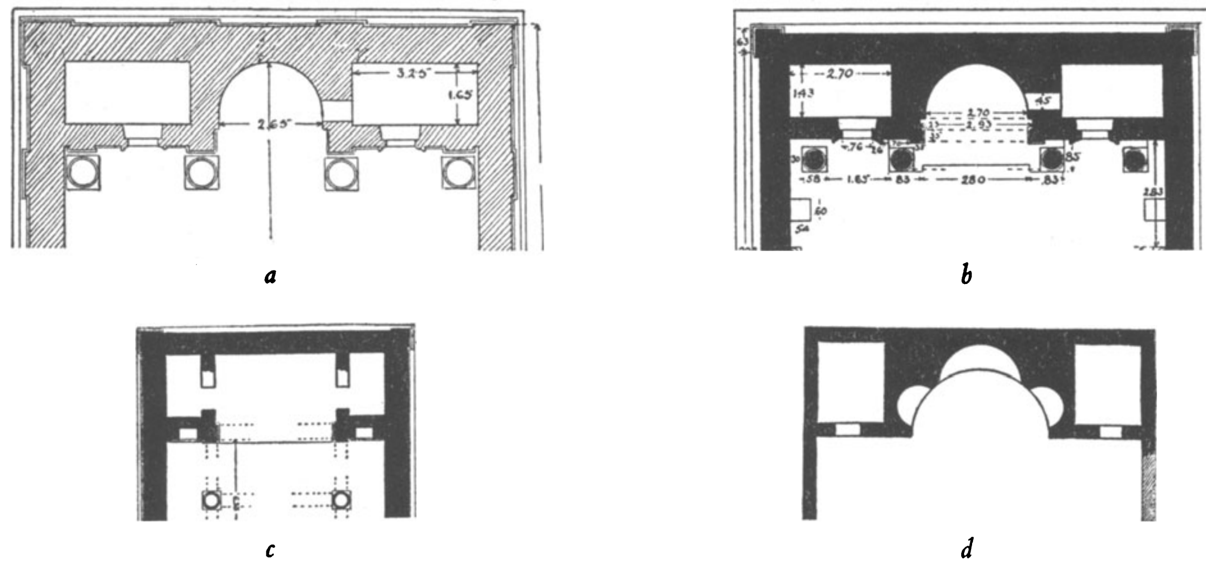


Fig. 9. TRIPARTITE PAGAN SANCTUARIES IN SYRIA. PLANS
a. Slem. *b.* is-Sanamen A.D. 191. *c.* Temple of Zeus, Kanawat. *d.* Seraya, Kanawat

Chapter II

The Liturgical Background of the Early Byzantine Church

A CHURCH or a temple is essentially a reflection of man's approach to his religion, for, in its fundamentals, as Lethaby has written, 'a temple may almost be defined as a localised representation of the temple of the heavens not made by hands'.[1] Architectural traditions and availability of building materials may dictate methods, but they are not creators of forms. The origins and subsequent geographical dispositions of the squinch and the pendentive as a means of siting a dome over a square base hold an important place in the history of architecture, but their prominence in that connection must not be allowed to screen the fact that if a domical form of temple is essential to man's religious expression he will create one, whether the materials and skills to hand be the working of cement, stone, bricks, solid rock, wood, woven materials or skins. His work may differ in execution and in technical perfection but this will not affect the practical achievement of its purpose.

No matter what the religion, the universal essentials of a temple erected for congregational worship are the enclosure within a single precinct of a sanctuary, within the confines of which only the priesthood may officiate, and accommodation for lay members of the community. The sanctuary, specifically intended for ritual or liturgical purposes, must always be indicative of the ceremonial concepts of the priesthood, while the public part or nave, to use the general term adopted by Christianity, similarly expresses in an architectural medium the instinctive religious approach of the lay congregation. Although, both socially and architecturally, the two must function as a single unit, it does not necessarily follow that they always stem from a common root. In some circumstances, often, for instance, in temples or churches belonging to foreign missions, an architectural compromise replaces the natural unity which should exist between sanctuary and nave. Consequently, the evolution of religious architecture and its regional variations during the formative fourth, fifth and sixth centuries A.D. can provide an illuminating insight into the influences bearing upon Christianity during that critical period.

First we must examine briefly the basic religious architectural concepts of Christianity's pagan predecessors. In the Hellenic lands of the eastern Mediterranean the weather has always borne the aspect of a friendly, neutral element. The sky, with the sun, moon, stars and rain, was regarded as a natural phenomenon, which, except for sudden storms at sea which could endanger sailors foolhardy enough to venture too far from shore, behaved with an almost unexceptionable moderation. Regarding it as a cosmic roof or ceiling arranged in their wisdom and omnipotence by the Olympian gods, the ancient Greek saw little reason to try directly to propitiate any of its components, which he logically regarded as being instruments rather than principals of divinity. His religious side, in fact, was amply occupied in contending with the vagaries of his gods, whom he visualised in the form of superhuman Hellenic men and women roaming the human world as well as the Olympian heights so that no Greek, be he ever so humble, might not be the

[1] W. R. Lethaby, *Architecture, Nature and Magic* (London, 1956), p. 30.

subject of an Olympian prank or be seduced by a god or goddess in some ordinary, everyday disguise. Greek religious statuary developed as three-dimensional because the Greeks were always accustomed to the idea of their gods moving among them on a physical level with themselves, so that they naturally visualised them 'in the round'. When social developments dictated the removal of their places of worship to urban environments, the original sacred groves encompassing the sanctuary were transformed into colonnades standing in the middle of an open space.

The Greek religious theme was echoed in Rome, possessor of a nearly similar climate and not too dissimilar geographical circumstances. For some centuries, too, it found a temporary home in western Syria, but here the predominant influence has always arisen from the desert, Semitic hinterland and not from the small, Hellenic-type strip of mountain-backed coastland that was once Phoenicia and is now the Lebanon. Elsewhere, to the desert dweller of Syro-Arabia, the nomad of the Eurasian steppes, the desert-bound, riparian peoples of Egypt and Mesopotamia, the seafaring Arab traders who, unlike the Greeks, were ocean as well as coastal sailors, the monsoon-dependent inhabitants of India, the highlanders of Anatolia, Iran, the Caucasian or the Balkan ranges, the weather appeared as a supernatural force, upon the vagaries of which all existence depended, and which consequently needed continual appeasement.

However much the elemental forces of the sun, moon, stars, wind and rain might be portrayed as personified divinities, they had nothing of the essential 'humanity' of the Greek gods. The supernatural rather than superhuman quality of their powers placed them far above the reach and comprehension of ordinary, puny mortals. Such conditions were naturally productive of an intermediary, priestly or leader caste, combining divine 'connections' with earthly leadership. In the non-Hellenic civilisations this priestly caste emerged in the forms most appropriate to the prevailing social scheme, from solitary Semitic leaders such as Moses among the Israelites, to the powerful, entrenched priesthoods of Egypt and India, and the divinely appointed kings and their priestly acolytes of Persia. To such civilisations, the dwelling-place of the gods, the 'temple of the heavens not made by hands' was no sacred grove, it could only be the sky. According to their skills and their available materials each fashioned their 'temples made by hands' after the domelike shape of the great sky temple. Sometimes this took the guise of an artificial mound; sometimes as a vault or dome of rock, stone, brick, wood or wattle; sometimes it was a ceremonial, though simple tent. The conception persists to-day in such widely different forms as the ciborium of the European cathedral, the dome of the Orthodox church and Islamic mosque, and the ceremonial umbrella of African and Asian despots — but always, consciously or unconsciously, it signifies the omnipresent sky, where dwelt the power of life, and death, and rebirth.

Mystic ritual was the basic essential for a priesthood or leader caste whose *raison d'être* was its apparent effectiveness in mediating between ordinary mortals and the sky gods. It is significant that by far the greater part of the sculptural art of these peoples was relief work. Their art was primarily religious art, and, unlike the Greeks, they never approached their gods sufficiently closely or informally to see them 'in the round'. This was the awesome privilege of that small, exclusive, divinely appointed class, who alone had been initiated into the secret ceremonies through which, and only through which the gods could be reached. Within such a context an iconoclastic attitude towards religious art followed naturally. A statue in the round, a 'graven image', was an attempted reduction of a supernatural deity to a comprehensible, more or less human form. A relief sculpture or a painting compromised between a fundamental desire of ordinary mankind to approach and personally come to terms with his god and the priesthood's vested determination to retain its role as the exclusive intermediary. As such, it developed as the generally acceptable form of religious art of the Near and Middle East.

Once Christianity had accepted its role of a world religion, it had, of necessity, to adapt itself to the Greco-Roman religious approach on one hand and to the Oriental on the other; the former, for practical purposes already an homogeneous unit, the latter, as we have seen, expressing itself with considerable variety. Nevertheless, due to Hellenistic and Semitic syncretism, the genius of the early apostles, particularly of St Paul, and the discipline which the early

Church imposed upon itself, the intrinsic development of Christianity as a religion for both East and West went, on the whole, remarkably smoothly during its first three centuries. No matter where a Christian travelled, he found his co-religionists worshipping along acceptable and familiar lines and was able to take part in their services.

Nevertheless, although Christianity had been born at a common meeting-ground of Greco-Roman and Oriental thought, the whole Christian world was very far from any real unity. Christianity was making a great and an increasingly deep impression, but by the fourth century its effect was still superficial in relation to the cumulative impact of the civilisations of the pre-Christian past. For all the forces of syncretism, there were still, to use a simplification, two opposite poles in the field of religious approach, the Greco-Roman and the Oriental. As soon as Christianity was permitted freedom in the heterogeneous Roman Empire the differences emerged in Christian religious practice and architecture just as they had in the practice and the temples of its various predecessors. The Christian traveller of the first three centuries A.D., like the Greek during the century following Alexander's victories, was experiencing an ideal of unity that was unfortunately only temporary. In both cases the unity was destroyed by the divergent social and religious approaches of East and West, as well as, to an important but lesser extent, by political ambitions of rulers. Yet, in neither event was all lost. Hellenism followed from the first attempt at unity, although its overwhelming Greek emphasis quickly caused its rejection by the greater part of Alexander's Asiatic conquests. The Byzantine Empire, synthesising the approaches of East and West more effectively, succeeded in balancing them more or less successfully for over a thousand years. It is in this context that Byzantine art and architecture must be considered, and it is Macedonia's position, always at or near the fulcrum of the balance, that gives to its monuments so much of their interest and importance.

The Greek word *ecclesia* did not come to possess an architectural connotation until the third century A.D. Its original meaning was 'assembly', and the early Christians of the Roman Empire related it specifically to the solemn assembly of those fully initiated into Christianity for the celebration of the eucharist. These assemblies were held in the strictest privacy, for not only was the ceremony an exclusive, though essentially corporate act, but, despite periods of relative toleration, Christian worship in the Roman Empire was a capital crime from the reign of Nero (54–68) to that of Valerian (253–60). After this, although the law against Christian assembly was relaxed, for another fifty years the illogicality persisted that Christians were still liable to the capital charge of *laesa maiestas*. Diocletian's persecution, the fiercest and most unremitting in the Church's history, occupied the decade immediately prior to the final Edicts of Toleration. Yet, even when politically tolerated, Christians had had to contend with persistent mob hostility. A small and peace-loving but illegal sect was a useful scapegoat in time of disaster, the more so because the belief was popularly held that Christian practices included cannibalism and incest.[1]

In the Roman Empire, therefore, until the second half of the third century the use of public churches or temples for the celebration of the eucharist was out of the question. Instead, as has been found in Aquileia on the north Adriatic coast, in Ostia near Rome and at Dura Europos on the Euphrates, rooms in private houses were discreetly adapted, and a compromise found between the physical structure of the most suitable type of room available and the liturgical needs of the act of worship.

An analysis of the pre-Constantinian eucharist has been given by Dom Gregory Dix in *The Shape of the Liturgy*, from which book the following summary extract is taken. The proceedings opened with an exchange of greetings between the president or bishop and the *ecclesia*, followed by 'the kiss of peace enjoined by the New Testament, the bishop with the clergy round the throne, and laymen with laymen and women with women in the congregation'. A linen cloth was then spread over the altar by the deacons.

> These are preliminaries. The eucharist itself now follows, a single clear swift action in four movements, with an uninterrupted ascent from the offertory to the communion, which ends decisively at its climax.
>
> The bishop is still seated on his throne behind the altar, across which he faces the people. His presbyters

[1] G. Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy* (London, 1945), Chap. VI.

are seated in a semi-circle around him. All present have brought with them, each for himself or herself, a little loaf of bread and probably a little wine in a flask. . . . These oblations of the people, and any other offerings in kind which might be made, the deacons now bring up to the front of the altar, and arrange upon it from the people's side of it. The bishop rises and moves forward a few paces from the throne to stand behind the altar, where he faces the people with a deacon on either hand and his presbyters grouped around and behind him. He adds his own oblation of bread and wine to those of the people before him on the altar, and so (presumably) do the presbyters. . . .

The bishop and presbyters then laid their hands in silence upon the oblations. There followed the brief dialogue of invitation, followed by the bishop's eucharistic prayer, which always ended with a solemn doxology, to which the people answered 'Amen'.

The bishop then broke some of the Bread and made his own communion, while the deacons broke the remainder of the Bread upon the table, and the 'concelebrant' presbyters around him broke Bread which had been held before them in little glass dishes or linen cloths by deacons during the recitation of the prayer by the bishop. . . .

Then followed the communion, first of the clergy, seemingly behind the altar, and then of all the people before it. Nobody knelt to receive communion, and to the words of administration each replied 'Amen'.

After the communion followed the cleansing of the vessels, and then a deacon dismissed the *ecclesia* with a brief formula indicating that the assembly was closed — 'Depart in peace' or 'Go, it is the dismissal' (*Ite missa est*), or some such phrase.[1]

With only minor variations, this was the eucharistic rite practised by Christians of the pre-Constantine era throughout the Roman Empire. A liturgy performed upon such simple lines could be conducted in any room large enough to hold the local Christian congregation. In the large apsidal-ended rooms which were sometimes to be found in the greater Roman houses of the period, it was natural that the bishop should have his throne in the centre of the apse with his presbyters on either side. In the physically similar circumstances of a Roman civil court, it was the position of the president and his assistants. However, apse or no apse, the bishop sat at the head of the room. In front of him stood the altar table, the centre-piece of a space, probably marked off, for the ministrations of the clergy and deacons. Gathered round this space in order to experience as full a sense of participation as possible were the lay members of the *ecclesia*. During the long years of persecution, when attendance, if discovered, could automatically result in a sentence of death or penal servitude for bishop and layman alike, the atmosphere must have been one of simple and informal dignity, with little time or room for hierarchic pomp and ceremony.

With such a background it was natural that when, at long last, the Christians of the Roman Empire were able to build churches in which to hold their *ecclesia* in full freedom of worship, they should retain the form of sanctuary which had been developed in secret by successive generations, and which had been sanctified by the blood of martyrs during the years of persecution. The shape of the church, whether basilical, circular, polygonal, cruciform or square, with or without transepts, and whether the ceiling was domed, barrel-vaulted or timbered, was decided by the religious instincts and special requirements of each individual locality. But the form of the sanctuary was already set, and, for a time, was common to all.

Beyond the Roman frontiers in the Parthian Empire of Persia, the Church had grown up in different circumstances, for there it had enjoyed freedom of worship from its earliest days until the middle of the fourth century. Christianity had entered by way of Edessa, one of the most influential early schools of Christian doctrine and, as a centre of Semitic culture and Syriac language, of far-reaching importance not only south-west into Syria but also south-east to the predominantly Semitic population of central Mesopotamia. A leading city of northern Mesopotamia, Edessa was also the capital of the small semi-autonomous Roman protected kingdom of Edessa, or Osrhoene, in northern Mesopotamia. It was in this region that a thousand years or so earlier the Hurri had foreshadowed, in contemporary terms but so remarkably, something of the ethical humanism of the Christian message. A legend, widely current and believed during the early centuries of Christianity, gives details of a correspondence between King Abgar of Edessa and Christ in which the former invites Christ to Edessa in order to cure him of a serious illness. Copies

[1] G. Dix, *op cit.* pp. 103-5.

of this alleged correspondence, which included Christ's letter declining the invitation but promising to send one of His apostles in His place, were regarded as talismans of extreme holiness and effectiveness. Carved in stone they were inserted into or above the gates of cities, among them Macedonian Philippi. Legend apart, there is no doubt that Edessa adopted Christianity at a comparatively early date and its first Christian king is reputed to have been baptised in 206.

The one Semitic Liturgy that has survived is that of SS. Addai and Mari, the traditional 'apostles' of Edessa. Originally composed in Syriac, it appears to have been the standard rite of Northern Mesopotamia and differs from the Antiochene liturgy of St James in its almost entire freedom from Hellenisation. It may thus provide us with a reasonably reliable clue to the manner in which the eucharist was performed in Persia's western provinces. Analysing this rite, Dix comments:

> To come upon a eucharistic prayer which from beginning to end in its original form has no mention of God the Father or of the Holy Trinity, of the passion of our Saviour or His resurrection, which does not so much as use the words 'bread' and 'wine' or 'cup', or 'Body' and 'Blood', or speak the name of 'Jesus' is in itself remarkable. No less unusual is the omission of any explicit mention of 'partaking' or 'communion'. All these things are no doubt latent there and taken for granted, but they are not of the framework of this prayer, as they are of the framework of prayers that have been inspired by the systematic Greek theological tradition, *Addai and Mari* is a eucharistic prayer which is concentrated solely upon the *experience* of the eucharist, to the momentary ignoring of all other elements in Christian belief and thought. *Marantha!* 'Our Lord, come! (or perhaps 'has come'), the ecstatic cry of the first pre-Pauline Aramaic-speaking disciples, is the summary of what it has to say.[1]

Comparing it with the western eucharistic prayer of St Hippolytus, the liturgy adopted by Rome, Dix says:

> It is not only in their contents that the two prayers form a contrast, so that what each develops and insists upon the other leaves unsaid or barely hinted at. It is in their whole background of thought and genius that they are different. Hippolytus, for all the relics of old Jewish form, is thoroughly Hellenic in its attempt to frame its statement of the essential meaning of the eucharist in rational relation to the whole Christian revelation. *Addai and Mari* is equally Semitic in the intensity of its absorption in the eucharistic experience, and in its concentration upon eschatology to the exclusion of philosophising. . . .
>
> In *Addai and Mari*, by contrast with Hippolytus, the emphasis is not on the historical process of redemption by the passion and resurrection, but on its eternal results.[2]

The absence of allusions to 'partaking' or 'communion' and the emphasis on experience rather than rational relation of the Christian revelation are significant indications of the manner in which traditional Persian or Oriental approaches to religion had continued into Christianity. Nevertheless, the differences between the Eastern and Western versions are shallower than the points of agreement. It is an impressive tribute to the influence of Edessa that this should have been so, and that in spite of all the difficulties, including differences in conditions of worship, cultural background and racial mentality, and the constant warfare between Rome and Persia, the Persian church should have remained in communion with its fellow Churches of the Roman Empire as late as the first half of the fifth century.

The conditions under which the liturgy of western Persia was performed — we have no evidence to tell us how it was practised by the Christians of the eastern, non-Semitic areas — were very different from those obtaining in the Roman Empire. Had Christianity been allowed freedom of worship from its earliest days in the Roman Empire, the form of the eucharistic ceremony would not have been based on a discreet and simple service held secretly in a room of a private house. If it had been simply tolerated without actual official encouragement, it would, as an essentially proselytising religion, have had to make itself both popularly respectable and attractive in order to gain adherents, for whom there would have been no lack of competition from other religions. If, on the other hand, it had become the adopted religion of the emperor and his court, it would have been at once invested with the full panoply of imperial pomp and splendour. This last is what did, in fact, happen to Western Christianity,

[1 & 2] G. Dix, *op. cit.* pp. 186–7.

but only after a delay of nearly three centuries, an important formative period during which other influences of a very different nature had left strong impressions.

In Persia, Christianity received toleration but not official support, which was the perquisite of the state religion of Mazdaism. Not until Constantine took the step of claiming a responsibility for Christians abroad does it appear to have been regarded as anything but a harmless minority religion by the Persian secular or religious authorities. In these circumstances we can perhaps assume that its earliest stages, under the leadership of missionaries from Edessa, were not very dissimilar from those in the pre-Nero Roman Empire which are described in the Acts of the Apostles. But in the more tolerant atmosphere of Persia it could not have been long before rooms in private houses were discarded in favour of larger, specially constructed buildings where services could be held more appropriately and, to some extent at least, on a par with those of other religions. A suitable form of building was to hand, the tripartite *ivan* (Fig. 2), equally adaptable to royal audiences, the requirements of a civil court or a temple for religious worship. In Mesopotamia, and probably on the Iranian plateau, it was the appropriate local environment for religious ceremonies. However, it also implied an hieratic distinction between the clergy and the lay congregation that was completely foreign to contemporary Christian communities in the Roman Empire. From this, and in the context of other Persian religions, in particular the official Mazdaism, an increased emphasis upon ceremonial aspects was an inevitable step.

Although these architectural and liturgical developments stemmed from essentially Persian origins, the border between the two rival empires was by no means as clear-cut culturally as it was politically. Trade, in the hands of Semitic merchants, flowed to and fro along the caravan routes. Prisoners of war introduced new ideas and customs. Above all, the Christian Semitic population of Edessa enjoyed almost as close relations with their brothers across the Persian frontier as with their co-subjects of Rome in northern Syria. The free Church of Persia exerted always, therefore, a degee of influence upon its fellow-Semitic co-religionists in Syria, and they, in turn, upon the non-Semitic Christians in the West. Thus, the Semitic population of Syro-Mesopotamia continued to fulfil its traditional role of synthesising civilisations, the natural tendencies of which would have been to follow divergent ways.

The original liturgical uniformity which persisted during Christianity's first two hundred years in the Roman Empire had already begun to develop signs of regional variations when the combination of the Edicts of Toleration, imperial patronage and the Church's early General Councils brought a new impetus to unity. Nevertheless, these brakes on disunity were neither sufficiently strong nor lasting enough. Regional differences went too deep to be cemented by episcopal discussions or imperial dictates. On the contrary, the institution of Christianity as the official religion of the Empire had the effect of converting political differences into religious issues, a form in which the activities of opposition parties could and did permissibly find expression.

It is a fact, however, that the great religious questions that shook the Christian world during the fourth and fifth centuries were not reflected in ecclesiastical architecture. Gregory of Nyssa might comment of Constantinople, 'all places, lanes, markets, squares, streets, the clothes' merchants, money-changers and grocers are filled with people discussing unintelligible questions. If you ask someone how many obols you have to pay, he philosophises about the begotten and the unbegotten; if I wish to know the price of bread, the salesman answers that the Father is greater than the Son: and when you enquire whether the bath is ready, you are told that the Son was made out of nothing.' Similar incidents were no doubt commonplace among the Greeks of Alexandria and Antioch. But Arianism and the other early Christian variations of the fourth, fifth and sixth centuries only indirectly affected the physical details of the performance of the liturgy. Doctrinal differences and architectural divergencies alike had older roots, reaching deep into the pre-Christian past.

Unofficial Roman Christianity had grown up within the context of, and official Roman Christianity had modelled its organisation upon, the great political divisions of the Empire. There was no accident in the coincidence of the three great apostolic foundations,

Rome, Alexandria and Antioch, with the Empire's three leading political and administrative centres. The elevation of Constantinople to the position of capital in 330 added a fourth political and, in consequence, ecclesiastical centre, resulting, in 381, in the greater part of Asia Minor being taken from the see of Antioch to form the Constantinople patriarchate. Rome was less generous, but in the fourth century Thrace was detached from its territory and added to Constantinople. The rest of the Balkans, and even at times Thrace, remained a field of contention between the Old and New Romes, until a thousand years later, the Moslem Turks, after utilising Christianity's dissensions to achieve their conquest, decided, on their own terms, in favour of Constantinople.

For all that Antioch had been the main territorial loser through the creation of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, it was from Alexandria that there came a virulent and even vindictive opposition to the Patriarch of the new capital. The Council of Constantinople, in creating the new Patriarchate, had specifically stated that 'the Bishop of Constantinople shall rank next to the Bishop of Rome, because Constantinople is New Rome'. This made it clear that the Council had no intention of deposing Rome from its position of seniority, but besides paying a realistic compliment to the new capital, it had 'the additional aim of lowering the pride of the Patriarchate of Alexandria, whose great Bishop Athanasius had become embarrassingly influential'.[1]

Alexandria had held the position of second city of the Roman Empire since the beginning of the Christian era. With its wealth, noble buildings, famous university, library, and reputation for culture that extended throughout the known civilised world, it is not difficult to imagine that its Greek and Egyptian population considered themselves superior to the Romans in all but military prowess and the fortune of war. Constantine's choice of Constantinople as his eastern capital had demoted Alexandria to be the empire's third city in secular authority, but this insult was minor compared with its ecclesiastical demotion half a century later. Many complicated factors entered into the situation. Pride was one. The decision, however inevitable, but emphasised by the manner of its delivery, was received like a slap in the face, not only by Athanasius but by every Christian Alexandrian who proudly recalled that his Church had been founded by the Apostle Mark. Contemporary politics, too, played a part. And not least was the ambitious and militant personality of Athanasius, the acclaimed, if unofficial, national leader of Egypt.

[1] S. Runciman, *The Eastern Schism* (Oxford, 1955), p. 14.

Differing in so many ways, Greeks and Egyptians were one in their stubbornly active dislike of any government they did not consider was theirs. On both peoples too, a dynamic personality exerted a strong emotional appeal. In all the circumstances therefore, it was not surprising that Alexandria, representing the Christianity of the Egypt that had earlier defied imperial Rome, rose in bitter opposition against the *parvenu* Constantinople: and that this opposition became crystallised in the unscrupulous activities of a succession of its powerful and brilliant Patriarchs. Nevertheless, as Baynes so wisely reminds us, it is

> easy to forget and essential to remember that though the opposition to the imperial government was led by Alexandria, though that Alexandrian leadership dazzles us by the great personalities in which it was incorporated, by the spectacular splendours of the vast stage on which the drama was enacted, yet behind the façade of Alexandria lay the Egyptian people. When the last great protagonist of Alexandria had suffered shipwreck at Chalcedon, there still remained the Egyptian people for whom a Monophysite faith stood as sign and symbol of their alienation from (New) Rome and the Roman government: it was the massive resolution of the Egyptian people to remain loyal to that Monophysite faith that yet again defeated all the king's horses and all the king's men.[2]

Less flamboyant and belligerent than Alexandria, Antioch, the other great patriarchate of the East, exerted a far more positive and durable influence on Byzantine Christianity. It had been diminished territorially by the transfer to Constantinople of the important Anatolian region, including Cappadocia, but this loss was more than offset by the authority with which its views thereby found representation in the capital. Antioch's strategic position in the dissemination of Christian doctrines had always been strong. Now it became supreme.

[2] N. H. Baynes, *Byzantine Studies and Other Essays* (London, 1955), p. 101.

Towards the end of the third century, and during a considerable part of the fourth, the churches of Asia Minor, and especially those of Cappadocia, Pontus and Bithynia, had close and frequent relations with the see of Antioch. It was from Antioch, moreover, that the Gospel was carried towards these regions. Caesarea had looked to Antioch before owning obedience to Constantinople. It was by the bishops who came from Antioch or Caesarea — Gregory the Nazianzene, Nectarius, Chrysostom, Nestorius — that the Church of Constantinople was ruled at the period when it received its final organisation.[1]

The early liturgical 'families' of Eastern Christianity fall into four groups, usually differentiated as: the Western Syrian, practised in Antioch and Jerusalem; the Eastern Syrian or Chaldean, developed in northern Mesopotamia and Persia; the Cappadocian-Byzantine, which was accepted by Constantinople, Asia Minor and Armenia, and which later became the official Byzantine form; and the Coptic, or Egyptian, adopted by Egypt, Nubia and Ethiopia. The importance of Antioch is reflected in the fact that the first three all ultimately derived from its teachings, and in the circumstances of Christianity's early growth could hardly help but continue to be to some extent influenced by its thought. Moreover, the Byzantine emperors, for all their role and interest in doctrinal matters, regarded the internal peace and security of the empire as their first concern. In the absence, therefore, of any overriding considerations to the contrary, they were more likely to give their support to the positive attitude of Antioch than to the often negative and usually obstructive ideas of Alexandria. In following such a policy they would be certain also to have the support of the Patriarch of Constantinople. Thus, under her Patriarchs as under her Pharaohs, Egypt could make her voice heard and even gain admiration and respect abroad, but she failed completely to do more than convert fleetingly or to leave any really lasting or constructive impression on the wider issues affecting the evolution of Christian doctrine.

On the other hand, not only did a liturgy of Syrian origin develop into the Orthodox ritual of the Byzantine Church, but its architectural context, the Syrian form of sanctuary, travelled and established itself, either temporarily or permanently, as far afield as the Adriatic, Spain, Gaul and Britain. Even Rome, during the first two centuries or so of the Christian 'renaissance' that followed the disasters of the fifth century, was deeply affected.

Syria enjoyed another advantage over Egypt. By virtue of its Semitic population it was culturally the meeting-place as well as politically the frontier between the two leading world powers, the empires of Byzantium and Persia. Alexandria remained an important station on the route to India, but even here, development of the Arabian land routes must have considerably diminished its trade. Moreover, with the replacement of the Parthian Arsacid dynasty by the brilliant Sassanians, the exotic attraction which India had had for the West was gradually, but to a very considerable degree, transferred to Persia. The mosaic panels of Justinian and Theodora in S. Vitale at Ravenna are but one example of the ascendancy which Persian royal splendour and ceremonial art had gained in the Byzantine court by the reign of Justinian. Syrian influence on the West was not, therefore, confined to the simple projection of its own national and religious genius. In the Sassanian period in particular it included a pervasive and substantial Persian element that was to show itself in an added emphasis upon the ceremonial aspects of the liturgy.

While increased ceremonialisation of the pre-Constantinian liturgy was inevitable once Christianity had been awarded an official status that amounted, in effect, to imperial patronage, the manner in which this was achieved was peculiarly the result of the joint penetration of Byzantine Christendom by Persian ceremonial forms and the Syrian liturgy. At a very early stage, possibly as early as the second century or even before, a small difference had shown itself in the order of the eucharistic service as practised by the Church of Antioch on the one hand and that of Rome and of Alexandria on the other. In the Antiochene liturgy the offertory of bread and wine that each communicant brought to his *ecclesia* was handed to the deacons either before the service or at its very beginning; in the versions of Rome and Alexandria the oblations took a ritual place after the recitations of the Creed and the Pax. Seemingly a small procedural difference, it fell

[1] L. Duchesne, *Christian Worship, Its Origin and Evolution* (English translation of 5th edition; London, 1931), p. 71.

within the same category as the cloud that was no bigger than a man's hand.

When the new era of Christianity opened in the reign of Constantine we find the opening Offertory Procession an important feature of the three Syrian liturgies, the West Syrian, the East Syrian and the Cappadocian-Byzantine. It did not exist in the liturgy of Rome or Alexandria, nor, at that period, in the Franco-Spanish rite. It is interesting to see that in her account of the eucharistic ceremony in which she participated in Jerusalem in 385, Etheria, a Spanish pilgrim, makes a particular point of this procession, although she is careful to omit any mention of the bread and wine, the Body and the Blood of Christ which was still a mystery of which knowledge was reserved to the initiated, and therefore not a fit subject for description in a letter home. After speaking of the general service, in which she comments that there were many sermons, Etheria writes:

> The monks escort the bishop to (the church of) the Resurrection and when the bishop arrives to the singing of hymns, all the doors of the basilica of the Resurrection are thrown open. All the people go in, but only the faithful not the catechumens. And when the people are in, the bishop enters and goes at once inside the screens of the martyrium in the cave (of the Holy Sepulchre, where the altar stands). First thanks are given to God and then prayer is made for all. Afterwards the deacon proclaims aloud. And then the bishop blesses them standing within the screens and afterwards goes out. And as the bishop proceeds out all come forward to kiss his hand.[1]

West of the Syrian sphere of liturgical influence, which did not at first include the whole of Asia Minor, ceremonial and disciplinary requirements were similarly bringing an increasing formality into Christian worship. The historians of the period, in particular Sozomenus and Callistus Nicephorus, throw light upon an early round in that struggle between Roman Bishop or Pope and (Holy) Roman Emperor that was to colour so much of mediaeval European history.

At the end of the service which marked the public penitence of Theodosius for the Massacre of Thessalonica the weeping emperor entered the sanctuary to lay his oblations upon the altar table. He then remained there, in accordance with the practice of Constantinople, to receive the bread and wine. Ambrose sent him a message by a deacon commanding him to withdraw: 'The Emperor must worship with the rest of the laity outside the rails. The purple robe makes emperors only, not priests.' The penitent Theodosius humbly obeyed and, on his return to Constantinople, insisted upon following the Ambrosian rule. To Necarius, who remonstrated with him, he is said to have replied, 'With difficulty I have learned the difference between an emperor and a priest. It is hard for a ruler to meet with one willing to tell him the truth. Ambrose is the only man whom I consider worthy of the name of Bishop.'

But, whatever its disciplinary problems, and whether they affected emperors or the humblest of laymen, the Roman Church retained as one of its fundamental liturgical concepts its pre-Constantinian idea of 'participation' through the individual act of oblation. The emperor might enter the sanctuary or stay outside, but every Christian accepted into the Faith might approach it to make his offering, and could participate in the ceremony of its consecration.

In the Syrian liturgical sphere, however, it was the essentially Oriental and mystic sense of 'experience', that characteristic of the rite of Addai and Mari, which prevailed. Early in the fifth century we find Theodore of Mopsuestia in eastern Cilicia, writing:

> We must think, therefore, that the deacons who carry the eucharistic bread and bring it out for the sacrifice represent the invisible hosts of ministry (*i.e.* angels) with this difference, that through their ministry and these memorials they do not send forth Christ our Lord to His saving Passion (like the angel in Gethsemane). When they bring up (the oblation at the offertory) they place it on the altar for the completed representation of the passion, so that we may think of Him upon the altar as if He were placed in the sepulchre after having received His passion.[2]

Theodore informs us that this ceremonial procession took place 'while all are silent, for before the liturgy begins all must watch the bringing up and spreading forth before God of such a great and wonderful object with a quiet and reverend fear and a silent and noiseless

[1] G. Dix, *op. cit.* p. 438.

[2] G. Dix, *op. cit.* p. 282.

prayer'.[1] In the latter part of the sixth century, however, this silence was replaced by the singing of a specially composed hymn, the Cherubikon:

'We who the Cherubim mystically figure forth and sing the thrice holy hymn to the life-giving Trinity,
lay we aside all worldly cares
that we may receive the King of all things
guarded invisibly by the armies of angels.
Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.'[2]

The Persian influence in favour of splendid and colourful ceremony which is so evident in the Justinian and Theodora mosaics in S. Vitale is no less clearly reflected in this liturgical development.

[1] G. Dix, *op. cit.* p. 283. [2] G. Dix, *op. cit.* p. 285.

In following the progress of this Eastern, and basically Syrian, Offertory Procession, we have, in fact, been observing the origin and development of the Orthodox Byzantine ceremony of the 'Great Entry', the ritual act of carrying the dedicated Elements from the table or room of prothesis (gifts for God) to the altar for consecration. Although this was only officially adopted by the whole Orthodox Byzantine Church during the second half of the sixth century, it was no sudden innovation, but, as we have seen, the culmination of a lengthy evolution. In fact it had been present with a varying degree of ceremony wherever the Syrian liturgies were practised since pre-Constantinian times.

Chapter III

Sanctuary and Nave in the Early Byzantine Church

IN its essential features Early Christian architecture was a reflection of past history rather than contemporary dogma. St John Lateran and St Peter, two of the first, as well as the most important churches to be erected by Constantine in Rome, were planned on the lines of earlier Greco-Roman basilicas. Excavations have now made it reasonably certain that St John Lateran, the first of the two and the cathedral church of the Bishop of Rome, was originally a simple Hellenistic basilica consisting of a nave and four aisles, a single, western apse and clerestory lighting; and that its transept was a later, probably early tenth-century, addition.[1] The second, St Peter, was, in effect, a double church; a basilica comprising a nave and four aisles, and an annexed, western transept with a central apse. The former was the church proper, the latter a martyrium,

[1] J. Toynbee and J. Ward Perkins, *The Shrine of St Peter* (London, 1956), p. 206.

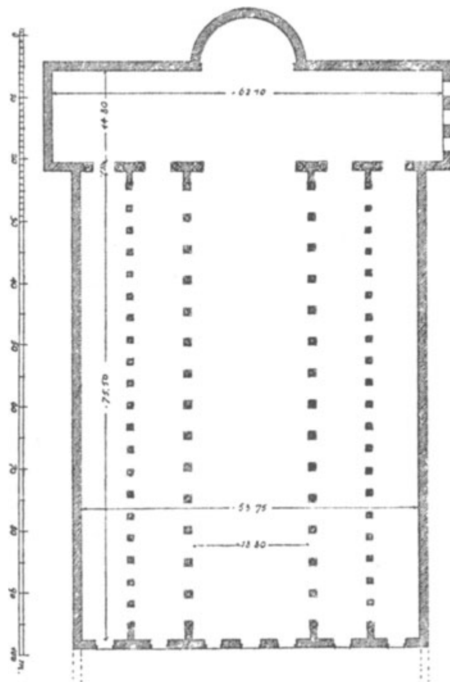


Fig. 10. BASILICA OF ST JOHN LATERAN, ROME. PLAN

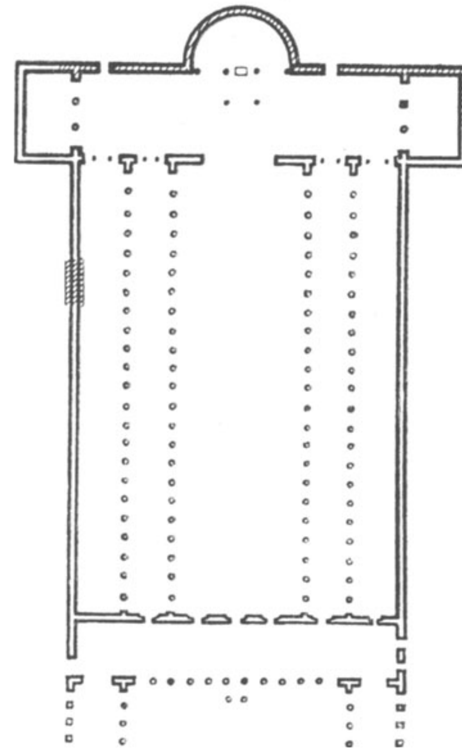
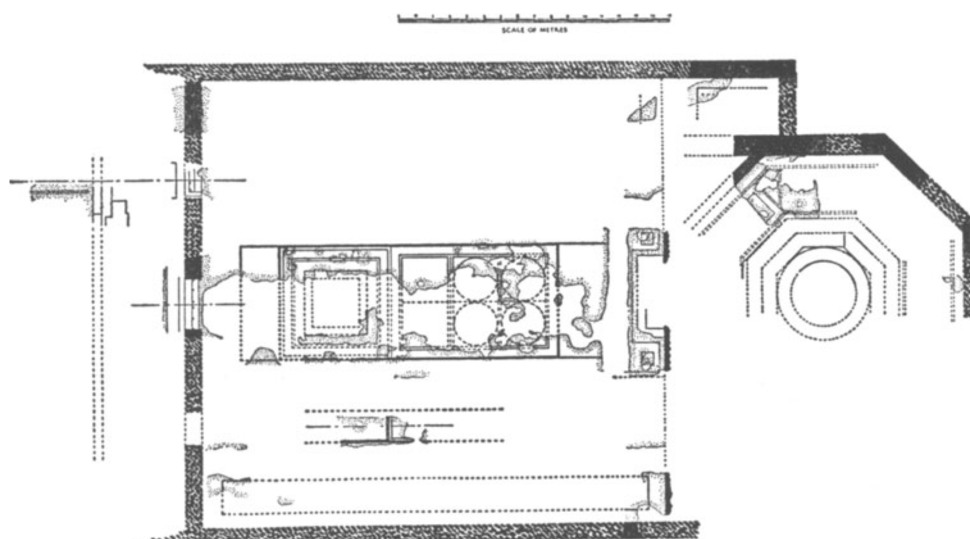


Fig. 11. CONSTANTINIAN BASILICA OF ST PETER, ROME. PLAN

Fig. 12. CONSTANTINIAN CHURCH OF THE NATIVITY, BETHLEHEM. Plan of remains



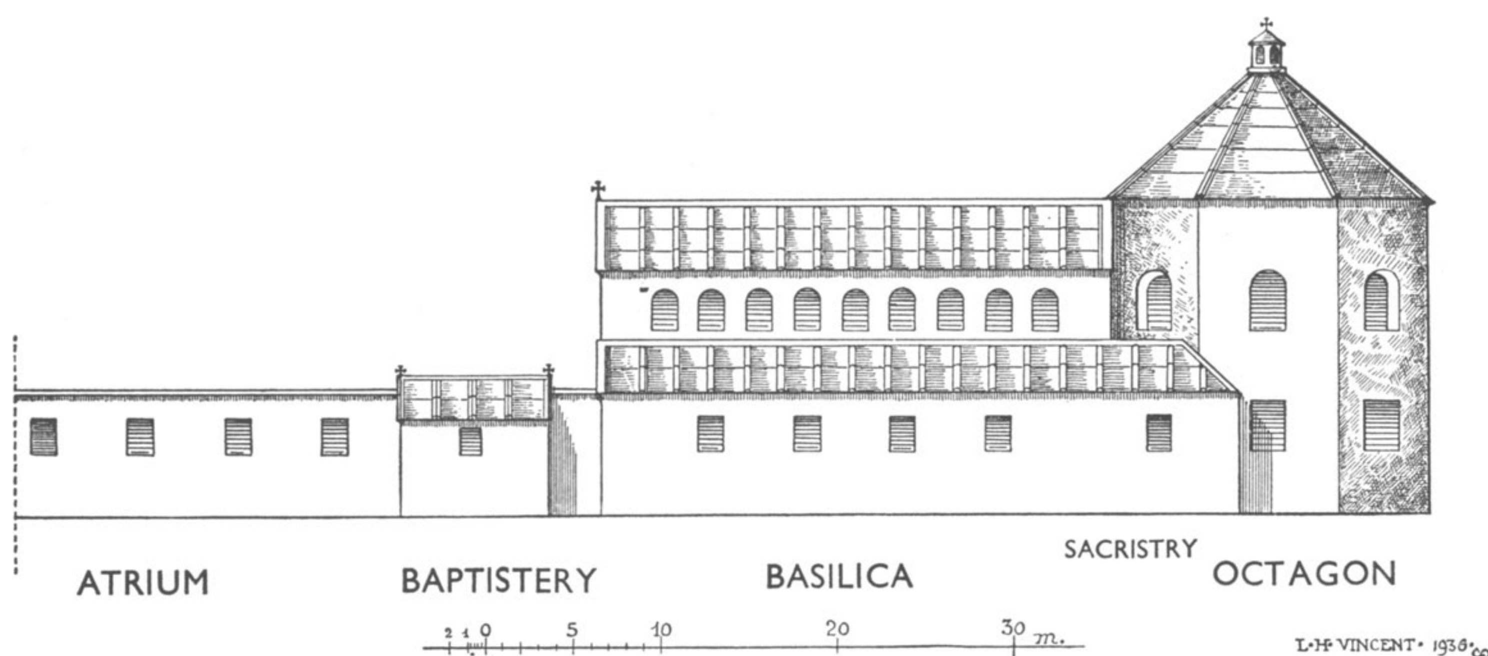


Fig. 13. CONSTANTINIAN CHURCH OF THE NATIVITY, BETHLEHEM. Schematic reconstruction by Vincent

the purpose of which was to house the relics of St Peter. The fourth-century site of the altar, in consequence, could not have been in front of the apse in the transept, for not only would this have been in an annexe of the church, but the position was already occupied by the ciborium and crypt containing the sacred relics. Toynbee and Ward Perkins suggest that the altar, possibly a portable one, was situated in the body of the nave.[1] This was a common position for it in the Roman provinces of North Africa, a region possessing particularly close connections with Rome.

The *Ecclesiastical History* of Eusebius leaves us in doubt regarding the exact disposition of the sanctuary in the cathedral of Tyre built by Bishop Paulinus about 314. This church comprised a propylaeum leading into an atrium, from which three doorways opened into a splendid basilica with a high carved timber roof and possessing a

> loftiness that reacheth heaven. . . . Having completed the temple he (Paulinus) adorned it with thrones, very lofty, to do honour unto the presidents, and likewise with benches arranged in order throughout in a convenient manner ; and after all these he hath placed in the midst the holy of holies even the altar, and again surrounded this part also, that the multitude might not tread thereon, with a fence of wooden lattice work,

[1] J. Toynbee and J. Ward Perkins, *op. cit.* p. 208.

delicately wrought with the craftsman's utmost skill, so as to present a marvellous spectacle to those that see it.

Constantine built five churches in Syria, the Church of the Nativity at Bethlehem, that of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, the Eleona on the Mount of Olives on the city's outskirts, a church at Mamre near Hebron, and the 'Golden Church' in Antioch. His Church of the Nativity was pulled down and rebuilt by Justinian in the sixth century, but recent archaeological research has shown that it was a basilica with, at one end, an octagonal structure enclosing the cave in which the Nativity was reputed to have occurred. Eusebius is our only source of knowledge of the group of buildings erected by Constantine on the site of the Holy Sepulchre. Here, like the cathedral at Tyre, an eastern propylaeum opened into an atrium, from which three doorways led into a magnificently decorated basilica. This basilica, known as the Martyrium, comprised a nave, four aisles, above which were galleries, and at its western end the 'Hemisphere', as far as can be ascertained an apse-like structure which had twelve columns, signifying the twelve apostles. Galleries, lit by upper windows, ran above the aisles, and the ceiling was constructed of richly gilded timbers. A second atrium, west of the Martyrium, connected it with the Anastasis, a circular building enclosing the Saviour's tomb.

Almost nothing is known of the church at Mamre which was probably intended to commemorate the scene of Abraham's hospitality to the three angels. Of the 'Golden Church' at Antioch we know only that it was a richly embellished octagon, its circular nave encompassed by aisles, above which ran galleries. In the case of the Eleona, however, through the fact that its foundations were cut in the solid rock, excavations have revealed the plan reasonably fully, indicating a close resemblance to Bishop Paulinus' cathedral at Tyre.

From these Constantinian churches, constructed either in Rome or under imperial patronage in the Holy Land, an unimportant region in the field of Christian architecture before the fourth century and, therefore, likely to reflect Roman views with undivided fidelity, we can gain a picture of the original official Roman conception of the Christian 'temple of the heavens not made by hands'. It was a basilica, well lit, usually with clerestory windows. One or two aisles, marked by colonnades, lay on either side of the central nave. Above the aisles were galleries. The ceiling was flat or beamed. Three doors, the one in the centre more splendid than the other two, led from an atrium with fountains for ceremonial ablution, into the eastern end of the basilica. The western end terminated, as a general rule, in either a plain, flat wall or a martyrium. In Rome, the latter took the form of a rectangular transept; in Syria an octagonal or circular structure was preferred. The sanctuary, containing the altar, occupied part of the nave. In this position, it was easily accessible to the lay members of the congregation, from whom it was separated only by a low chancel screen.

Although translated into temple architecture, in all its essentials and particularly in its arrangement of the sanctuary, this was still the room in which pre-Constantinian Christians had secretly celebrated their rites. However, it is important to recognise that it also closely followed the form of the pre-Christian, Greco-Roman temple, with the Christian sanctuary and altar in the place of the pagan cella.

The shapes of the annexed martyria, though separate in purpose from the basilicas, are significant, for here more latitude seems to have been given to the expression of local religious attitudes. Rome preferred to house the relics of St Peter in an apsed rectangular basilica. In Palestine, however, the two most holy spots, the Grotto of the Nativity and the Holy Sepulchre, were respectively marked by domed octagonal and circular structures. Both these forms were rooted deep in Oriental antiquity. The circle, the form of the sun's orb and the natural basis of the great sky dome, was perhaps man's oldest religious symbol, and, as L'Orange has shown, was the idealised city plan — on both the earthly and the cosmic plane — of the Ancient Near East.[1]

An octagonal base upon which to erect a dome was not only an architectural convenience; it had been hallowed by the principles of the sacred arithmetic evolved by ancient Mesopotamian civilisations, and this played an important part in the Western

[1] H. P. L'Orange, *Studies on the Iconography of Cosmic Kingship in the Ancient World* (Oslo, 1953), chap. I.

development of the octagon as a baptistery. Mâle states:

> This form was an application of mystical arithmetic taught by the Fathers; but, in order to understand the symbolic significance of the figure eight, it is necessary to know that of the figure seven, which is the union of four, the figure of the body, and three, the figure of the soul; seven is thus the figure of man. (Four is the figure of the four elements, that is to say the matter of which the body is composed; three, the figure of the Trinity, is the figure of the soul, made in the image of the Trinity.) All that concerns human life is ordered by series of seven. There are seven capital sins, seven virtues, seven sacraments, seven requests in the Pater Noster. Each man passes through seven ages, and the world itself will last no more than seven periods, six of which have already gone by. Coming after seven, which marks the limits, the figure eight is a breaking out. It announces a new life. It is like an octave in music by which everything begins again. It symbolises at the same time the final resurrection of the Last Day and the resurrection in anticipation which is the baptism.[1]

The experiment attempted in Constantine's Church of the Nativity at Bethlehem of uniting an octagon and a basilica was not a success. Although not entirely dropped, for it reappeared two centuries later in a cruciform plan at Kalat Siman (St Simeon Stylites) in North Syria, it was an unsatisfactory fusion of two different religio-architectural concepts. Eastern Christianity rejected it equally with the rectangular transept and preferred, if circumstances necessitated, to build a separate, 'twin' church to serve as the martyrium.

Architecturally, as well as geographically, the opposite pole to Rome in the Early Christian World was situated in Persian Mesopotamia. The Mesopotamian counterpart of the Hellenistic type basilica designed for congregational or parochial purposes was a rectangular, high-walled structure with a plain exterior that is sometimes described as a 'barn church'. Usually covered by a single roof, it was in all cases devoid of clerestory lighting. The interior consisted of a tripartite sanctuary and either a single nave ceiled by a barrel vault, if necessary supported by internal buttresses, or, more rarely, it would seem on the limited evidence available, a nave and two relatively narrow aisles, all ceiled by barrel vaults of equal height.

[1] É. Mâle, *La Fin du paganisme en Gaule* (Paris, 1950), pp. 218-19 (trans.).

Discussing an 'essentially Mesopotamian' plan, typical of the Mosul region, Gertrude Bell comments that

> the nave and aisles are invariably cut off from the sanctuary by a wall — it is too substantial to be called an iconostasis — broken by three large doors. This complete separation is not typical of primitive ecclesiastical architecture; it results, as a rule, from a development of the ritual; but it appears to be here a part of the original plan. The sanctuary is almost invariably divided into three parts, corresponding to the nave and aisles, and, as a rule, the central altar is covered by a dome set upon squinch arches.[2]

To the south, in central Mesopotamia, some early churches have recently been discovered at Ctesiphon and Hira (Fig. 14). All have a tripartite form of sanctuary which occupies the whole width of the east end. Describing this feature, Reuther remarks that the lateral chambers 'were entered from the nave through narrow doors and were also connected by small entrances with the altar room, which opened into the nave with a wider door. There was, however, a door here, not the open chancel arch usual in western churches.'[3] A second Hira church differs from the three in Figure 14 in having the entire width of the central altar room opening to the nave and in having double doors separating the lateral chambers from the public part of the church. A comparison with Figure 2 shows the clear relationship between these forms of tripartite sanctuaries and the traditional *ivan* plan.

'Here, and all around Mosul, the monks belonged to the Persian church, but when you get into the Tur Abdin you will find that it belonged to Rum (Rome)', the prior of a religious house remarked to Gertrude Bell in the early years of the present century.[4] The Tur Abdin, or the Mount of the Servants of God, is a remote plateau — so remote that to a large extent it has been able to escape the ravages of subsequent

[2] G. L. Bell, 'Churches and Monasteries of the Tur Abdin and Neighbouring Districts' (*Zeitschrift für Geschichte der Architektur*) (Heidelberg, 1913), p. 84.

[3] O. Reuther, 'Sassanian Architecture', *A Survey of Persian Art* (ed. A. U. Pope), Oxford, 1938, Vol. I, p. 564.

[4] G. L. Bell, 'The Churches and Monasteries of the Tur Abdin', included in *Amida* by M. Van Berchem and J. Strzygowski (Heidelberg, 1910), p. 224.

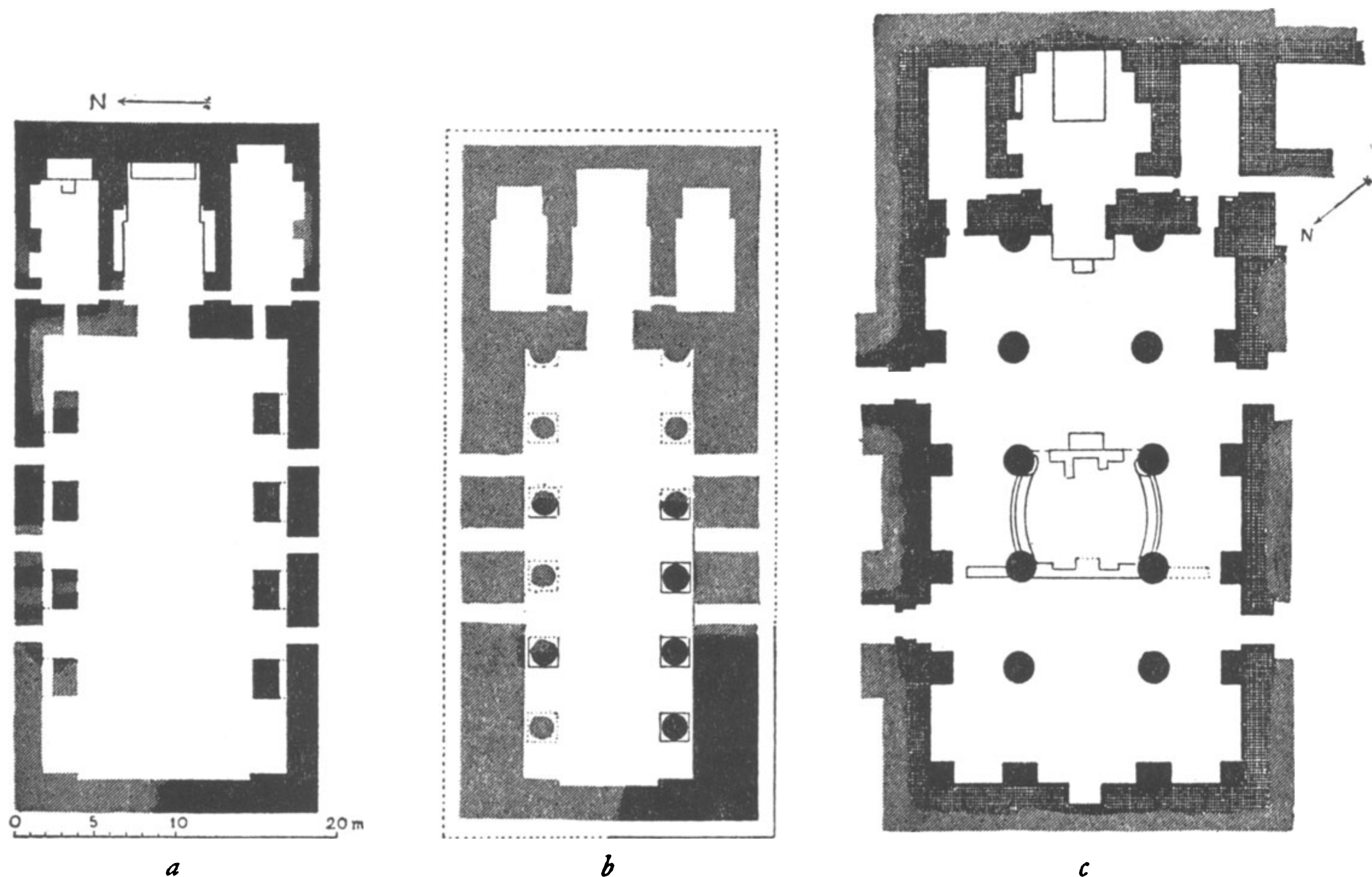


Fig. 14. SASSANIAN CHURCHES AT CTESIPHON AND HIRA, MESOPOTAMIA. PLANS
a. The later church and *b.* the earlier church at Qasr Bint al-Qadi, Ctesiphon ; *c.* church at Hira

invaders — that lay within the confines of the Roman-dominated state of Edessa. Roman connections and garrisons implied the introduction of western influences, but this by no means excluded the active presence of far older traditions as well as those current across the Persian border. The earliest surviving churches of the 'Roman' sector of Mesopotamia fall broadly into three main groups, the first two of which are to be found on the Tur Abdin and the third in the cities.

The first of these groups of churches, the normal monastic type on the Tur Abdin, is more or less square in plan. In every case it comprises a western narthex, a single transverse nave, its long axis running from north to south, and, as in Persian Mesopotamia, a symmetrically arranged, tripartite sanctuary, the central chamber of which contains the altar. A massive, structural wall pierced by a central and two lateral openings separates the sanctuary from the nave. Examples of this type are Mar Gabriel (Fig. 15*a*) and the Church of the Forty Martyrs at Qartemin, Mar Ibrahim at Midyad which has the tomb church of Mar Ubil, distinguished by its single-chamber sanctuary, attached to its north side, Mar Malka, also at Midyad, Mar Yaqub at Salah with its single, rounded protruding apse (Fig. 15*b*), Mar Yaqub el-Habis, which has a protruding, five-sided apse, and el-Hadr (the Church of the Virgin) at Khakh (Fig. 15*c*). The usual form of ceiling is barrel-vaulting throughout, but in the last named church an octagonal based dome rises above the centre of the nave.

Quite different features appear in the second, or parochial group of churches on the Tur Abdin. These are characterised by a single, long, barrel-vaulted nave, aligned on an east-west axis, and a single, deeply set apse at the east end. Doorways in the long southern wall connect the nave to an adjoining narthex and courtyard. Other doorways link the apse and one or, more often, two irregularly shaped rooms placed on either side of and behind it. Examples of this kind of

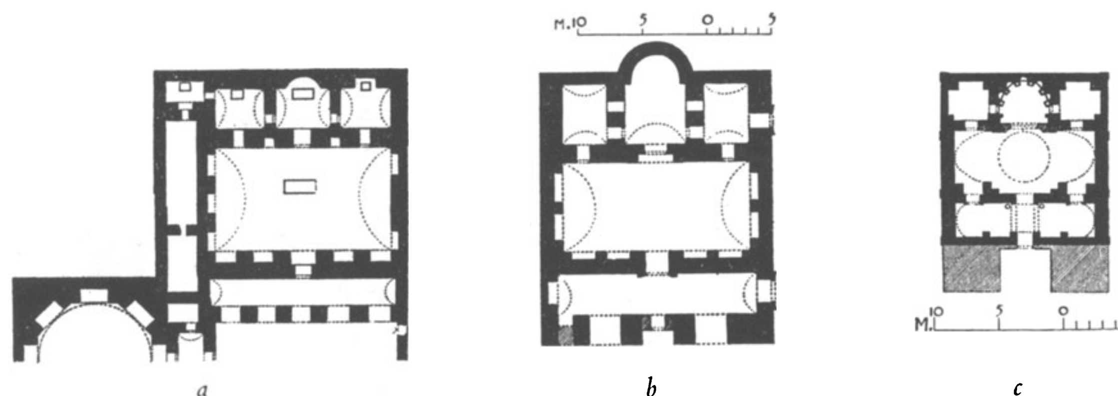


Fig. 15. MONASTIC CHURCHES OF THE TUR ABDIN, NORTHERN MESOPOTAMIA. PLANS
a. Mar Gabriel. *b*. Mar Yaqub, Salah. *c*. El-Hadr, Khakh

church are Mar Aziziel and el-Hadr at Kefr Zeh, Mar Kyriakos at Arnas, Mar Philoxenos at Midyad, Mar Augen, Mar Sovo at Khakh (Fig. 16).

Gertrude Bell concludes that

> the monastic churches preserve a Babylonian architectural tradition, the latitudinal chamber of palace and temple, with doors in the centre of the long sides, whereas the parochial churches recall the later Assyrian scheme . . . borrowed from Western Asia. It is curious [she continues] that even the second type seems to have been considered by the Christian builders of this region in the terms of the first. The longitudinal nave of the parochial churches is always approached from the broad side, the doors are invariably in the south wall, never at the west end, where a complete adherence to the longitudinal type would place them ; the narthex and atrium lie to the south ; the whole conception is that of the latitudinal chamber, although the nave is actually disposed in the contrary fashion with relation to the apse. Thus an old architectural tradition may be said to be still perceptible, to a greater or lesser degree in all these buildings, though they are stamped so profusely with the impress of Western artistic influences.

Gertrude Bell goes on to compare the parochial type of church on the Tur Abdin with architectural forms developed in adjacent regions many centuries earlier by the Hittites.

> The Hittite plan of palace and temple, which was known to the Assyrians as the Hilani . . . is the local fortress gate adapted to royal, domestic and religious requirements and . . . the essential characteristic of the structure is the latitudinal arrangement of the chambers. It is startling to place the plan of Hilani 2 at Sendjirli (I select this example because it was in all probability a cult building) beside the plan of the parochial churches of the



Fig. 16. PAROCHIAL CHURCHES OF THE TUR ABDIN, NORTHERN MESOPOTAMIA. PLANS
a. Mar Kyriakos, Arnas. *b*. Mar Sovo. *c*. Mar Augen. *d*. Mar Aziziel, Kefr Zeh

Tur Abdin. Here is the same entrance chamber or porch (the Christian narthex) with its door in the long side, the same latitudinal main chamber (the Christian nave) with the small room that contained the cult image at one end (the Christian apse), giving, as in the churches, a slight longitudinal emphasis which was never fully expressed in the architectural scheme. The original flanking towers of the city gate had already in Hittite times undergone considerable modification, in Hilani 2 only one of them remains ; in the small Hilanis of the upper palace, the latest monumental building on the site, the solid towers have given place to a side room or rooms. In the Tur Abdin, though the latitudinal disposition characteristic of the Hilani is retained, the towers have disappeared, and the memory of them is perpetuated only in the plan, by the subsidiary room at the eastern end of the narthex.[1]

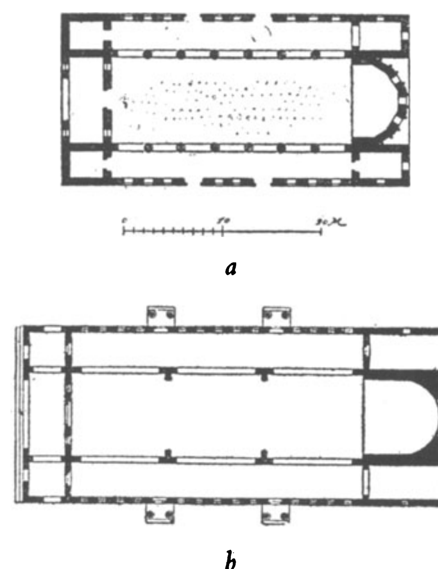


Fig. 17. BASILICAL CHURCHES OF NORTHERN SYRIA. PLANS
a. Turmanin. *b*. Ruweha

Too little remains from the Early Christian period in the cities of 'Roman' Mesopotamia for very definite conclusions to be drawn with regard to the third group of churches. With this qualification, however, it is perhaps permissible to note that the church of Mar Yaqub at Nisibis (Nisibin), the cruciform-octagon at Wiranshehr and, in Amida (Diyarbekr), the ruins of the Nestorian church, the Melkite church of Mar Kosmo and the Jacobite church of el-Hadr, are all characterised by large sanctuary-cum-choirs connected by relatively small openings with the naves. The dates of the three Amida churches are uncertain, but they probably belong to the fifth or sixth century; Wiranshehr is probably sixth; Mar Yaqub is dated to the mid fourth.

In the parochial churches of Northern Syria the cultural strength of Greco-Roman Antioch enabled western influences to meet those of Persian Mesopotamia on more advantageous terms. In consequence, we find time and time again churches built in the form of a Hellenistic basilica, with a clerestoried nave and two aisles, entered sometimes from the sides but usually from the western ends. Nevertheless, the sanctuary almost invariably adopts the tripartite form, an indication that, however much the congregation belonged to the West, in matters of ritual they adhered to the practices of the East. The tripartite sanctuary was a pre-Christian form in Syria (Fig. 9) as well as in Mesopotamia. Perhaps this was a result of the Achaemenian impact, perhaps Semitic syncretism had played its part. In any case, it implied a common religious approach in the two areas and one, moreover, that had been carried from the pagan into the Christian period unshaken by the invasion of powerful Hellenistic influences. This common approach must have greatly facilitated the acceptance in Mesopotamia of a liturgy based upon Antiochene teachings. In broad terms, therefore, Syro-Mesopotamia presented a relatively unified liturgical influence to the Early Christian World. In addition, it was one which had had early experience of associating with other congregations.

In eastern Anatolia another form of church appeared. Related to the parochial churches of both northern Mesopotamia and northern Syria, this was

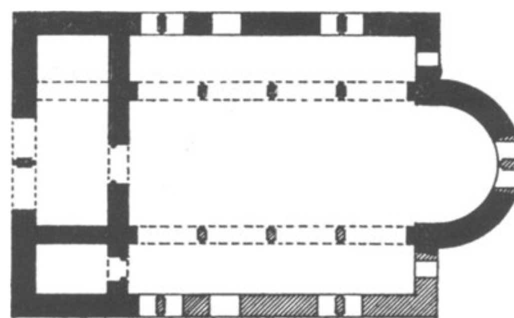


Fig. 18. CHURCH NO. 4, BIN BIR KILISSE, ANATOLIA. PLAN

[1] G. L. Bell, 'Churches and Monasteries of the Tur Abdin and Neighbouring Districts' (*Zeitschrift für Geschichte der Architektur*) (Heidelberg 1913), p. 84.

basically a 'barn church', but it was distinguished by a single, protruding, eastern apse instead of an inscribed, tripartite sanctuary and by a triple-chambered Hilani narthex, a feature common in Bin Bir Kilisse (Fig. 18) and also appearing in northern Syria (Fig. 17). In Bin Bir Kilisse the ground floor of this Christianised Hilani consisted of a central entrance chamber leading into the nave and a room on either side. The southern room was customarily separated from the entrance chamber by a solid wall and could only be entered from the south aisle. The northern, on the other hand, was usually connected with the entrance chamber by an arched opening and only seldom had access to its corresponding aisle. This siting of what was, in substance, the chambers of diaconicon and prothesis in the narthex was a characteristic of Cappadocia and neighbouring parts of eastern Anatolia and clearly derives from the cult functions of the ancient Hittite Hilanis. Northern Syria and northern Mesopotamia acknowledged Hittite — or eastern Anatolian — influence sufficiently to adopt the outward forms of the Hilani narthex, but they retained unchanged their native form of tripartite sanctuary. Significantly, it was this, rather than the Anatolian, single-apse type that was adopted in Armenia, in spite of the fact that Christianity probably came to that country from Cappadocia. It would seem that only in the ancient Hittite lands of eastern Anatolia did Christianity inherit the pagan Hilani building in anything like its original cult form.

Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose? Did a traditional form of religious architecture play an important part in shaping the Christian liturgy, whether in Rome, Syria, Mesopotamia, Cappadocia or elsewhere? Did official Christianity simply adopt the existing forms of pagan temples? Suitably qualified, either affirmative or negative replies could be given to all of these questions. In each case the answers could be partially correct, for it is the questions that are wrong. The truth is that Christianity did not suddenly appear as a violent and unheralded ideological revolution. Much of the pagan religious and social history of Greece and Rome, and of Syria, Mesopotamia and Cappadocia, is also the story of Christianity's long period of gestation. And while the ethnic genius of each region was making its ideological contribution to the future Faith, it was simultaneously developing its pagan form of temple as its loftiest means of religious architectural expression. The greater the ideological contribution to Christianity, the stronger the influence of its pre-Christian architectural concepts was likely to be, not only at home, but also abroad.

Thus we find during the fourth, fifth and sixth centuries architecture faithfully reflecting the powerful emanation of Christian impulses from the region of north Syria and northern Mesopotamia. However, since this architectural influence was simply an offshoot of the adoption of Syrian liturgies and not due to any acceptance of a Syrian way of life or Syrian colonies, it was limited to the sanctuary. The nave, with its aisles, ceiling, means of lighting and its narthex and atrium, continued to follow the forms traditional to each particular locality.

Examples of this architectural dichotomy, resulting from marrying a form of sanctuary appropriate to a Syrian liturgy to a nave suited to a Roman congregation, occur in the east Adriatic city of Salona. At the end of the third century Salona was the leading city of the flourishing Roman province of Dalmatia. On its outskirts, the site of the present-day port of Split, Diocletian built the great palace to which he retired in 305. Salona owed its importance and prosperity entirely to the Roman conquest of Dalmatia in the first decade of the Christian era, and its development in the ensuing three centuries had been that of a Roman colony enjoying close links with the imperial capital.

However, in spite of its proximity to Rome, Salona received its Christianity from the great missionary and theological centre of Nisibis, in northern Mesopotamia. Salona's first bishop, St Domnio, martyred by Diocletian during his persecution of the Salonitan Christians in 304, had come from Nisibis, and more than a century later Salona was still drawing her bishops from the Orient. Dyggve has given us a valuable account of the results of archaeological excavations that have been made at Salona. His reconstruction of the city's oldest church, the tiny Oratory A, which dates from the end of the third century, shows it as a rectangular hall divided internally by a transverse screen pierced by a single central doorway. Six pillars carry the screen to about half the height of the



Fig. 19. ORATORY A, SALONA, DALMATIA. PLAN

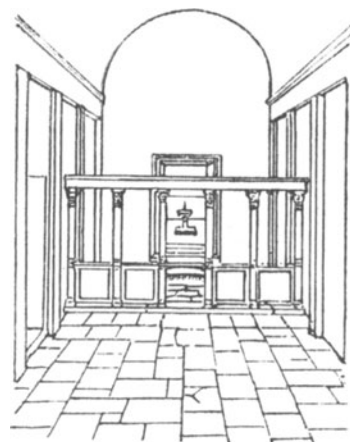


Fig. 20. ORATORY A, SALONA, DALMATIA
Reconstruction of sanctuary by Dyggve

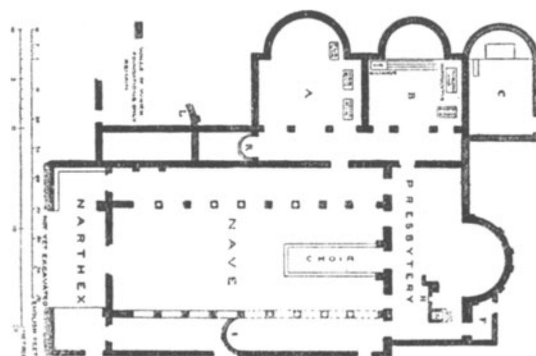


Fig. 21. BASILICA AT MANASTIRINE, SALONA, DALMATIA. PLAN

walls and support an architrave. The lower part of the screen consists of stone or marble panels, the upper is open, but capable of being closed by curtains. A doorway at the back of the sanctuary, slightly the smaller of the two divisions and containing a semicircular priests' bench, provided a separate entry for the clergy. Two other doorways in the north and south walls of the nave served the lay congregation.[1] Such a separation of the nave and sanctuary and arrangement of entrances was completely Oriental and altogether foreign to contemporary Roman Christianity.

Once the Edicts of Toleration had freed Salona's Christians from the necessity of worshipping in small, inconspicuous buildings, the community demonstrated its strength and wealth by the erection of a series of splendid and spacious churches. As far as those with a congregational purpose were concerned, the invariable form, as was to be expected in a predominantly Roman region, was basilical with clerestory lighting. In the arrangement of their sanctuaries, however, we continually find evidence of the conflicting liturgical attitudes of East and West. It is not always clear how the conflict was resolved, but the persistence of a very strong Eastern influence is shown by the number of churches in which the sanctuaries were emphatically separated from the nave and possessed a tripartite arrangement.

The fourth-century Southern Basilica, the original 'twin' building of the Episcopal Church, was unusual in that walls projected the colonnades separating the nave from the aisles a short distance before terminating in a semicircular apse. This was a feature of Justinian's rebuilding of the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, and it had the effect of providing more space for the sanctuary. In addition, there was an oblong chamber, in outward effect a continuation of the north aisle, on the north side of the apse. The basilica at Manastirine, also fourth century, had a single protruding apse, but here the pillars of the nave ceased approximately 7·50 metres from the east wall at a massive partition one metre thick which, pierced only by five narrow doorways, separated the sanctuary (in the form of an inscribed transept) from the nave in a peculiarly Oriental manner. A possibly later concession to Western attitudes appeared in a long, narrow chancel, enclosed by the customary Western low screen, which extended from the central opening of this partition into the nave.

In the mid-fourth century Five Martyrs' Church at Kapljuč a low chancel screen enclosed the altar space, but the apse was flanked by two irregularly shaped chambers. Almost identical was the Basilica 'Juxta Portum' which Dyggve describes as 'a clear Salonitan instance of the simple universal basilica type, with a narthex and the parabemata, prothesis and diaconicon which were almost obligatory for the larger churches

[1] E. Dyggve, *History of Salonitan Christianity* (Oslo, 1951), chap. 2.

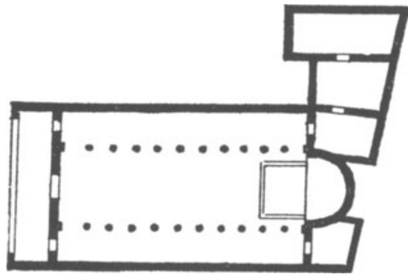


Fig. 22. BASILICA 'JUXTA PORTUM', SALONA, DALMATIA. PLAN

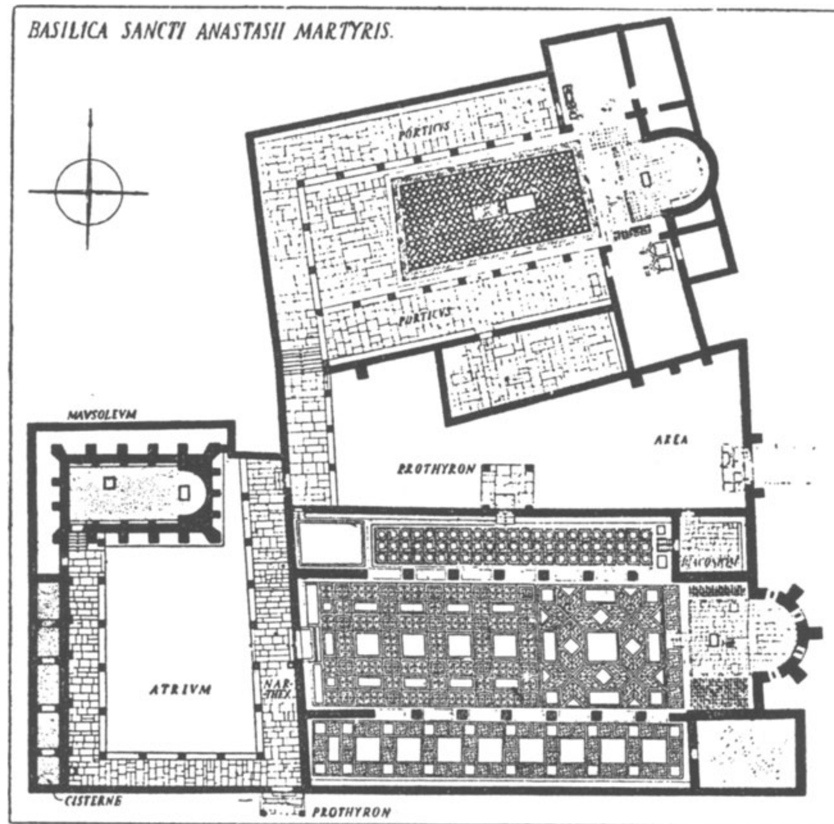
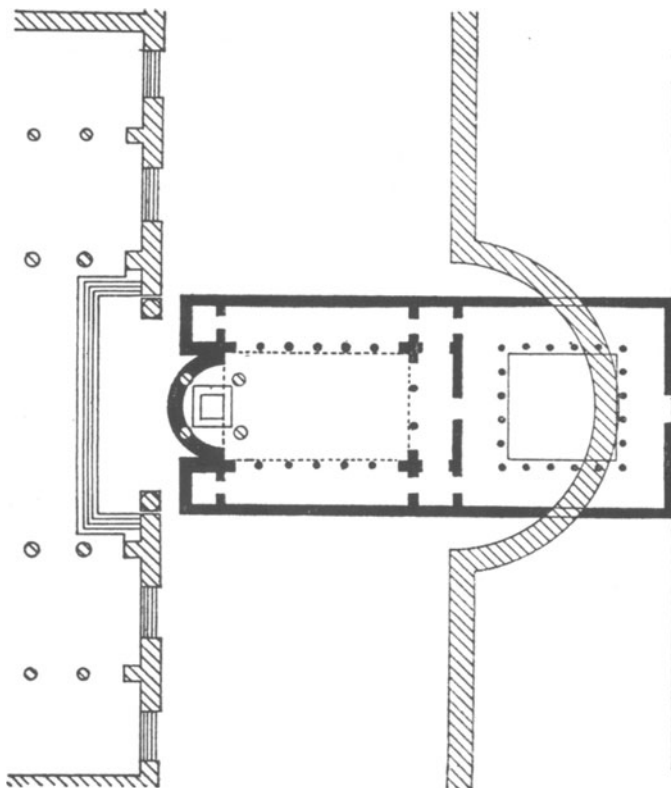


Fig. 23. TWIN BASILICAS OF ST ANASTASIUS AT MARUSINAC, SALONA, DALMATIA. PLAN

Fig. 24 (below). CONSTANTINIAN BASILICA OF ST PAUL-OUTSIDE-THE-WALLS, ROME. PLAN. The Constantinian basilica, with its Syrian form of tripartite sanctuary, was demolished when the church was reconstructed and enlarged in 386. In the original church the sanctuary was placed at the west end ; in the new (shaded parts) it lay to the east but the apostle-martyr's tomb, which had been situated within the apse of the original church, was not disturbed and remained within the sanctuary of the new basilica



as they were of practical importance for the liturgical rites'. The same principle seems also to have been followed in the fifth-century twin churches of St Anastasius at Marusinac, where although, in both cases, the single apses protrude, there are clear indications of internal, tripartite divisions of the sanctuaries. That Eastern influences continued to be strong in the sixth century is clear from the cruciform memorial church attached to the Basilica Urbana, and from the Basilica Occidentalis, the ground plan of which indicates similarities to that of the basilica at Alahan Kilisse (Koja Kalessi) in Cilicia.

A different picture appears in the coastal cities of the North Adriatic and their hinterlands. Here the earliest Christian influences appear to have been Roman. Not until the disruption of the Western Empire do we find evidence of the intrusion of Syrian forms of sanctuaries. Moreover, as the original Latin population was replaced by Gothic and Lombard invaders, the changes were not limited to the sanctuary, but included the introduction in some cases of definitely Oriental church forms, notable Ravennate

examples being the cruciform, so-called 'mausoleum' of Galla Placidia (in fact, probably a memorial chapel to St Lawrence) and the church of S. Vitale.

The existence of Syrian tripartite sanctuaries in third- to sixth-century Salona was not the consequence of an isolated missionary enterprise to the Adriatic. The region of North or Antiochene Syria, Cilicia, Cappadocia and north Mesopotamia, from the time of St Paul to that of the Nestorians who carried their Faith to China in the seventh century, provided Christianity with its main missionary impulse as well as the Roman Empire with its most ubiquitous traders. In Rome itself the Syrian sanctuary occurred in the Constantinian church of St Paul-outside-the-Walls, indicating the presence at that date of a reasonably sized community adhering to the Syrian rites. At Silchester in Hampshire the ruins of a fourth- or fifth-century church similarly demonstrate that such communities existed even in the north-western extremity of the Roman Empire. Spain likewise. Features characteristic of fifth- and sixth-century Syria and Asia Minor commonly found in surviving pre-Romanesque churches include prothesis and diaconicon chambers flanking the chancel, the horseshoe arch, horseshoe vaulting and horseshoe planned apse, barrel vaults with transverse ribs, and apses which are semicircular inside and either square or polygonal outside.[1]

The rooms of prothesis and diaconicon, described as *secretaria*, figure in the letters of Paulinus of Nola (*circa* 354–431). There are, he writes to his friend Sulpicius Severus, two *secretaria*, one to the right and one to the left of the apse, and he recounts their functions. The former was a place where the holy food was deposited and whence provisions and furnishings were taken to the altar; the latter was where the priests could study the scriptures and pray in privacy after the conclusion of the service.[2]

It is to Constantinople, however, rather than to any provincial centre, that we must go to seek evidence of the real strengths of the various complementary and conflicting influences that were forming the new Byzantine architecture. This is particularly the case since the political history of the Byzantine Empire between Constantine and Justinian is essentially the story of the consolidation of imperial power, based upon the new capital. In relation to Macedonia, moreover, its proximity, coupled with its prestige as imperial capital, gave it a particular importance. Little, unfortunately, is known of the city's earliest churches. Those of Constantine were short-lived. His great church of the Holy Apostles, the prestige of which was such that it served as a model for St Ambrose's church of the Holy Apostles in Milan, completed in 382, appears to have been cruciform in plan, with an octagonal base for the dome covering the central intersection. Eusebius says of it:

> The Emperor erected a church in Constantinople in honour of the memory of Twelve Apostles. The walls were covered with marble from pavement to roof; the nave was vaulted; and the dome, as well as the roof, was covered with plates of brass. Constantine caused his tomb to be erected in the centre of the church, in the midst of twelve other monuments, which he had erected in the form of columns, in honour of the Apostles.

Constantine also planned a church to be dedicated to Aghia Sophia (the Divine Wisdom) and this, a timber-roofed basilica, was completed by his son Constantius II in 360. Destroyed by fire in 404, it was rebuilt in 416, only again to be burnt to the ground during the 'Nika' riots in 532. Recent excavations have revealed remnants of these churches, but the evidence is still too small to permit tentative reconstructions. Constantine's Church of Aghia Eirene (the Divine Peace) appears also to have been a basilica and an enlargement of one of the churches built in the years before Byzantium was transformed into the imperial capital. Until 360 it was the city's cathedral and in 381 it was the scene of the Ecumenical Council of Constantinople.

The earliest Constantinople church that is still standing is St John of Studion, built in 463 as a part of the great monastery of Studion and dedicated to St John the Baptist. A basilica following a basically Hellenistic plan, it consists of a nave and two aisles, a single protruding apse without side chambers, galleries over the aisles, a timber ceiling, and a narthex extending the width of the church. The absence of a tribelon and the three-sided apse with three windows, on the other hand, indicate the penetration of Eastern

[1] B. Bevan, *History of Spanish Architecture* (London, 1938), p. 9.
[2] Paulinus of Nola, *Epistula 32*.

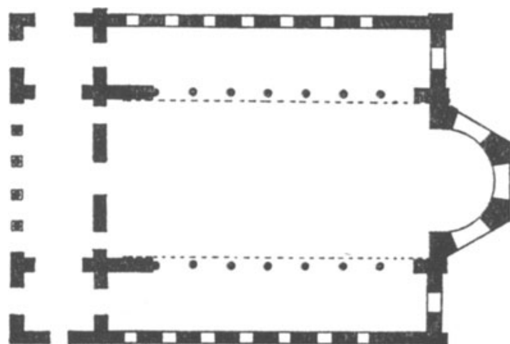


Fig. 25. BASILICA OF ST JOHN OF STUDION, CONSTANTINOPLE. PLAN

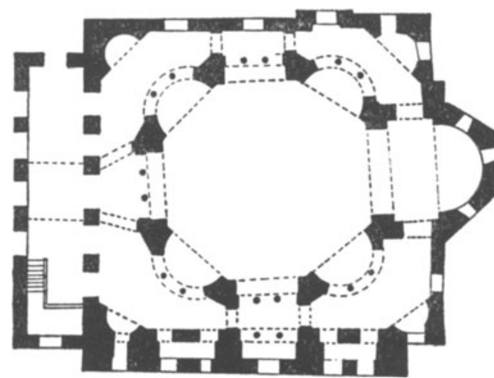


Fig. 26. CHURCH OF SS. SERGIUS AND BACCHUS, CONSTANTINOPLE. PLAN

influences. The traces of the less firmly dated but approximately contemporary church of St Mary Chalcoprateia appear to follow much the same plan.

Justinian and Theodora inspired a resurgence of the building impetus that had been so strong a characteristic of Constantine's reign. Between 536 and 546 the Church of the Holy Apostles was rebuilt, using a ground plan that seems to have followed broadly the lines of Constantine's original. A dome, pierced with a line of windows near to its base, surmounted the intersection of the four basilical arms; and four more domes, without windows, were placed at the ends of the arms. There was no apse; the sanctuary lay under the central dome. Galleries running round the church formed a second storey. The numerous columns and scintillating decorative scheme must have provided an even more dazzling interior than that of its famous predecessor. Although destroyed following the Turkish conquest, two western European copies, St Mark of Venice and St-Front of Périgueux, are legacies of its prestige and architectural influence.

Justinian also restored the Church of the Holy Saviour-in-Chora (Kahriye Camii). Originally constructed to an unknown plan about the beginning of the fifth century or earlier, the Justinian version, parts of which were retained in subsequent restorations, was a domed basilica with a tripartite, three-apsed sanctuary.

Three of Justinian's churches have survived into our own times, SS. Sergius and Bacchus, Aghia Eirene (the Divine Peace) and Aghia Sophia (the Divine Wisdom). The first was an ex-voto church, erected and dedicated as an act of gratitude to the two saints, the others replacements of the Constantinian foundations burnt in the abortive 'Nika' revolution of 532.

Begun in 527, in the first year of Justinian's reign, SS. Sergius and Bacchus (Fig. 26) was completed in 536. Essentially it consisted of a nearly square structure containing a large central dome carried by eight massive piers. A three-windowed apse, semicircular inside and three-sided outside, projected from the east wall. A narthex occupied the west front. The overwhelming emphasis given to the dome in SS. Sergius and Bacchus indicated the extent to which Oriental influences were gaining in Constantinople, but the harmonious relationship between the domed area and the rest of the church which was to characterise Aghia Sophia had not yet been achieved. SS. Sergius and Bacchus was, however, the forerunner of Aghia Sophia, not only in its general form, but in possessing the same type of lateral enclosures, which could be used for prothesis and diaconicon, on either side of the bema, or central altar space.

Aghia Eirene was built as a much more conventional type of domed basilica with a semi-inscribed apse and tripartite sanctuary. Although domed and lacking the apsidal eastern ends of the aisles, its ground plan was closely related to that of the domed basilica at Alahan Klisse (Koja-Kalessi) in Cilicia, erected in the first half of the previous century.

Aghia Sophia was the church upon which Justinian lavished everything within his power. It was the supreme architectural achievement of Byzantine civilisation. The work of two architects, Anthemius of Tralles and Isidore of Miletus, two cities in the Hellenised west of Asia Minor, it was and is unique in that neither in any of its parts nor in its whole is it Hellenistic or Oriental. As no other Byzantine church before or since, it attains a perfect fusion of the Hellenistic and Oriental elements that composed the Byzantine synthesis. Nowhere is this more evident than in, to quote

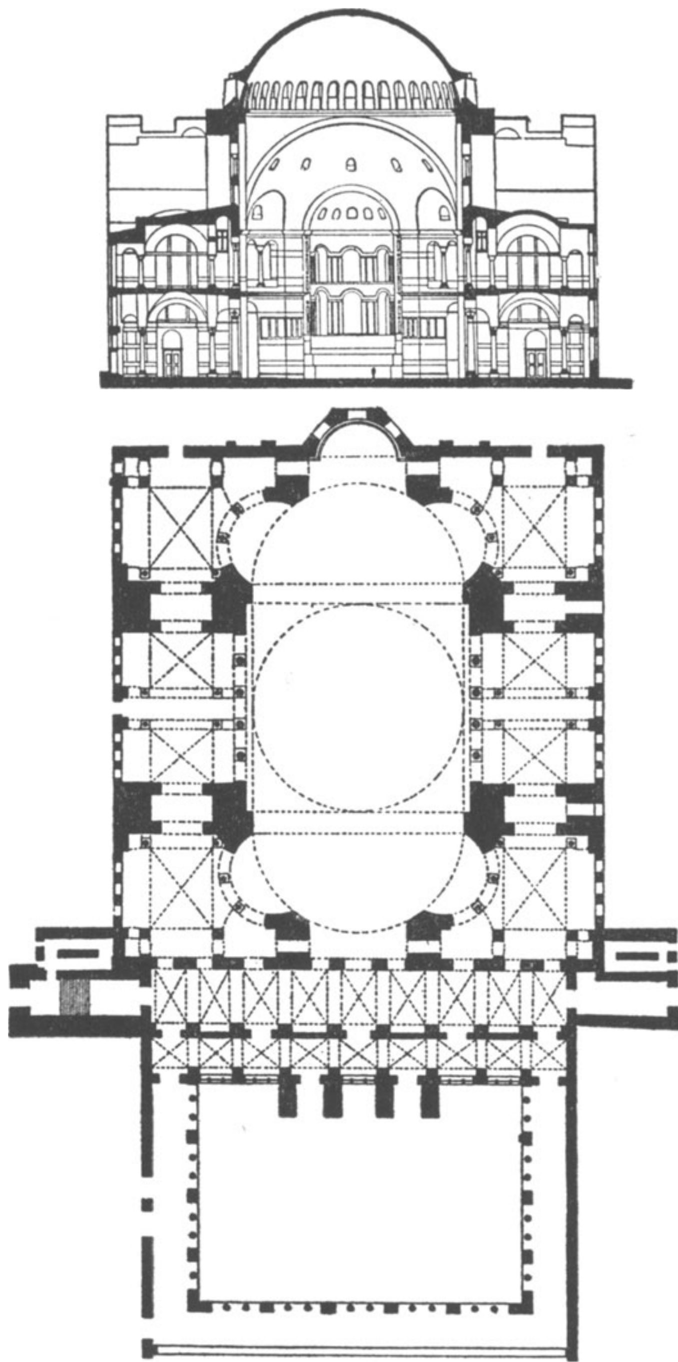


Fig. 27. CHURCH OF AGHIA SOPHIA, CONSTANTINOPLE. ELEVATION AND PLAN

Procopius' contemporary description, 'its golden dome, which seems not to rest on solid masonry but as if suspended from heaven to cover the space'. In fact, Aghia Sophia is ceiled by a dome that incorporates clerestory lighting; but the dome's brilliant design and proportions, its pendentives and its two supporting half-domes unite in perfect harmony the Oriental symbol of the sky temple and the Hellenic desire for light and simple axial symmetry. Procopius comments: 'Within it is singularly full of light and sunshine; you would declare that the place is not lighted from without, but that the rays are produced within itself, such an abundance of light is poured into it. The gilded ceiling adds glory to its interior, though the light reflected upon the gold from the marble surpasses it in beauty.' Similarly the ground plan of Aghia Sophia is neither centralised nor basilical, it is a synthesis of the two.

Byzantine civilisation never again realised the architectural perfection of Aghia Sophia, for never, in any part of the Empire, was the perfect balance of its component Greco-Roman and Oriental forces again attained. It was not only the supreme architectural achievement of one of Byzantium's greatest emperors and builders, but the climax of Alexander's ideal of a unified Mediterranean-Oriental empire eight hundred years before. In the light of Alexander's ideals it was fitting indeed that this climax should be the ecumenical cathedral of a religion that had been evolved through the synthesis of the Greco-Roman and the Oriental elements of his empire.

PART II

MACEDONIA BETWEEN ROME AND CONSTANTINOPLE



ST PAUL
(EXUPERANTIUS SARCOPHAGUS, RAVENNA)

Chapter IV

Roman Macedonia and the Mission of St Paul

THE Parthian revival of the Persian Empire occurred in the third century B.C. In the course of the next century Rome began its expansion into the lands bordering the eastern Mediterranean. Attempts by the Macedonian kingdom to resist Roman domination were finally liquidated following Roman victories in 168 and 148 B.C. The Romans neither regarded, nor treated, their Macedonian rival lightly and set out systematically to eradicate every trace of its power and independence. Perseus, the last Macedonian king, was seized in 168 while claiming political sanctuary on Samothrace and, after the failure of the final bid to regain independence in 148, the whole of the surviving aristocracy and the chief military and civil officials were deported to Italy. The most important industries were forbidden; the country was divided into four parts, and Macedonians forbidden to cross from one to another. Thus trade, as well as political control, fell largely into Roman hands. Quickly and brutally, the proud motherland of the empire which had reached to India was converted into a stagnant backwater of the Roman Empire.

Yet, rich in agriculture and forests, and straddling the strategic land-routes connecting the Adriatic and the central Danube plain with the Aegean, Macedonia could not be left indefinitely to decay. With all Illyricum falling under Roman domination in 27 B.C., and with the subjection by A.D. 46 of the fierce Thracian tribes in the eastern Balkans, it ceased to be a frontier province, and, in the security of the pax romana, began to recover from the severity of its conquest. Except for occasional, small-scale Thracian invasions or uprisings, and episodes in the civil wars of the first century B.C., little occurred to disturb its peace until the Gothic irruption midway through the third century A.D. The recovery of the ancient Macedonian capitals of Aegae and Pella was perhaps slow, but Thessalonica, the seat of the provincial governor, steadily developed into a city of considerable commercial importance and, in common with other leading provincial centres of the Roman Empire, received valuable civic privileges, including the right of minting its money. It played a minor, but, on the whole, profitable part in the civil wars of the first century B.C. Pompey, fleeing from Rome, chose it as his residence and headquarters until transferring to nearby Verria. The Thessalonians, however, managed to avoid retribution through having firmly maintained a policy of neutrality. A few years later, through luck or judgement, the city materially improved its standing in the Roman world by coming out in open support of Antony and Octavius prior to their victory at Philippi in 42 B.C.

For Philippi, lying at the easternmost limits of Macedonia on a narrow neck of firm land between the hills and the marshes which then extended over the greater part of the Philippi plain, the battle between the rival Roman armies was of great consequence. The victors were quick to realise its strategic situation, vital alike for the protection of eastern Macedonia against still unconquered Thrace, for the maintenance of communications with the Roman provinces of Asia Minor through the port of Neapolis (Kavalla), and as a base for any future expansion of the Roman Empire towards

the east. Reliable veterans from the victorious Roman army were given their discharge and awarded land on which to settle. Twelve years later Octavius brought over a still larger group of colonists from Italy. These newcomers quickly became, on both a large and small scale, the principal landowners in the region. With the administrative officials, they tended to remain a distinct group, not mixing with the Greek element, by whom the commercial life of the community continued to be maintained. The indigenous Thracians also continued as an important element of the population in the city of Philippi and, probably to a greater degree, in the countryside. Previously open to the influences of Hellenism, they were now no less susceptible to those of Rome; but, as archaeological evidence clearly shows, the traffic in ideas by no means flowed one way only.[1]

The heavy Romanisation of Philippi was probably exceptional among the predominantly Greek areas of coastal Macedonia, although at the same time Octavius settled other groups of Italian colonists at Pella, Dion (Dium), Cassandreia and at Dyrrhachium (Durazzo) on the Adriatic coast, to which the Roman administrative province of Macedonia temporarily extended. In general, however, the urban centres of the south appear to have continued to retain their Greek character, and to have received only small numbers of Italian settlers and officials.

Farther inland, among the mountainous ranges of the north and west, a different situation developed. In these wilder regions, even in the towns, Hellenisation had never been complete. Greek influence, while paramount and a strong civilising force, had had to contend with constantly shifting tribal populations and with cultural allegiances from beyond the Macedonian frontiers. These were principally Illyrian on the west and north and Thracian on the east. The lack of Illyrian or Thracian literature makes any estimate of their cultural contributions extremely difficult, but it was certainly far from negative. Scymnus of Chios, writing about a century before the beginning of the Christian era, calls the Illyrians 'a religious people, just and kind to strangers, loving to be liberal, and desiring to live orderly and soberly'. Other contemporary Greek or Roman historians are less complimentary, or more biased. One point upon which there is no doubt is that women were accorded an exceptionally favourable status in Illyrian society; a queen, Teuta, was one of the principal leaders of Illyrian resistance against the Romans. While the historians unfortunately leave us in ignorance of the nature of the religion of the Illyrians, other evidence, including traditional tattoo markings in the more primitive parts of Albania, suggests a strong cult of sun and moon worship.[2] Certainly later, during the first two or three centuries of the Christian era, Mithraism exerted an exceptionally powerful appeal in Illyrian areas.

The Thracians are classed together with the Illyrians by the Greek and Roman historians as peoples who tattooed their bodies and offered human sacrifices, who loved singing, playing the flute, dancing and fighting. In their social customs, however, the Thracians appear considerably more akin to the Scythians. Their religion, as we shall see when considering the impact of Christianity, included a strong concern with a future life. Unlike the Illyrian religion, it exerted a profound and direct effect upon the Roman conquerors, and Romanised forms of one of its principal aspects, the Heroic Hunter or Thracian Horseman, appear on funeral steles throughout central and eastern Macedonia and even as far north as Viminacium (Kostolac) on the Danube near Belgrade.

After the Roman conquest of Macedonia the flow of independent Illyrian and Thracian influences into the province must have sharply declined. Moreover, forceful and ruthless Roman administrators, Roman garrisons, the privileged activities of Roman merchants, all possessing the prestige of a conquering race and backed by the Roman genius for civil administration, aided Roman influences to supplant those of Hellenism in the non-Greek parts of Macedonia. Two other factors played an important part in this process. The first was the Roman policy of awarding grants of land in strategic areas to veteran soldiers. The second was the system of Roman roads, which was rapidly developed as soon as the conquest of the Balkans and Asia Minor was complete.

Two main strategic highways crossed the Balkan

[1] P. Collart, *Philippes, ville de Macédoine depuis ses origines jusqu'à la fin de l'époque romaine* (Paris, 1937).

[2] M. E. Durham, *Some Tribal Origins, Laws and Customs of the Balkans* (London, 1928), p. 101 *et seq.*

peninsula from west to east. The northern, linking the Balkans with the Roman cities of northern Italy and southern Germany, left the Pannonian Plain at Sirmium (Mitrovica) and Singidunum (Belgrade), followed the Danube to a point near Viminacium (Kostolac, Drmno), and the Morava until Naissus (Niš). It then passed through Sardica (Sofia), crossed the Succi Pass to Philippopolis (Plovdiv), Hadrianopolis (Edirne), Arcadiopolis (Lule Burgas), to Byzantium, slightly more than a month's journey from Singidunum. The southern road was the Via Egnatia. From the Adriatic ports of Dyrrhachium (Durazzo) and Apollonia two roads converged at Clodiana and then passed through Scampae (Elbasan), Lychnidus (Ohrid), Heraclea Lyncestis (near Bitola), Aegae (Edessa), Pella, Thessalonica, then, via Amphipolis, Philippi, Neapolis (Kavalla), Akontisma and Thracian Heraclea to Byzantium. A network of subsidiary roads connected the two highways and other outlying centres. North to south, the Singidunum route was joined at Naissus by a highway from Ratiara (Vidin) on the Danube which passed through Ulpiana (Lipljan, some ten miles south of Priština). Here it diverged, one branch going west along the present Peć-Andrijevica road to Scodra (Shkoder, Scutari) and reaching the sea at Dulcigno (Ulcinj); the other, and the more important, continuing to Scupi (Skopje), Stobi and Thessalonica. From Stobi roads also ran south-west to Heraclea and north-east to Pautalia (Kustendil) and Sardica. These were by no means the only routes of importance; others connected them with the cities based on the Black and north Adriatic Seas. Apart from their importance in linking Italy and Asia Minor, they were the main arteries of commerce and defence for the Balkan region and, consequently, for the diffusion and protection of its Roman civilisation.

The northern of the two great west-east highways was a pioneer Roman conception, for it lay off the paths of the early Mediterranean and Oriental civilisations. Parts of the Via Egnatia, on the other hand, retraced routes which had existed for centuries before the Roman conquest. They had been made use of by Xerxes in his attack on Greece and Alexander in his conquering expeditions to the east. Nevertheless, under the Roman occupation, the Via Egnatia attained a new efficiency and significance. The stretch linking Dyrrhachium and Neapolis was newly laid and completed by the end of the third quarter of the second century B.C. Its extension to Byzantium had to wait for the conquest of Thrace in A.D. 46, but a terminus at Neapolis sufficed for the control of Macedonia and for access to Asia Minor by a conveniently short sea-passage.

The intensification of the struggle with Parthia following the accession of Trajan in A.D. 98 further increased the importance of the Via Egnatia, an importance which was maintained until the first half of the fourth century. Milestones, erected to commemorate substantial repairs, bear the names of the Emperors Trajan, Hadrian, Marcus Aurelius, Lucius Verus, Septimius Severus, Caracalla, Constantinus Chlorus and Galerius. Inns, or 'Tabernae', were from the beginning built at appropriate staging-points, and there occurred at least one instance where one of these, the 'Tres Tabernas' or 'In Tabernas', gave its name to the locality. An epitaph discovered near the site of 'Ad Duodecimum', a staging-centre twelve Roman miles west of Philippi, commemorates C. Lavus Faustus 'institor tabernas' — one likes to think of him as a discharged veteran of the eastern wars or, maybe, of misty Britain who had retired with his gratuity to keep his inn — and records for posterity that [*sic*] he gave good measure. Nero, in A.D. 61 ordered 'tabernae' to be erected along the newly built military roads of Thrace.

The Via Egnatia was a highway along which men, ideas, merchandise and loot travelled towards Rome from Asia, as well as expeditionary armies on their way from Italy to the eastern wars. In this it differed from the subsidiary roads leading into the interior. The countryside around Stobi, Scupi, Ulpiana and Naissus had lain too far north for the penetration of Hellenic influences ever to have been thorough. Nor did it carry a Greek population that was, except in the case of Stobi itself and, to lesser extents, Scupi and Ulpiana, much more than a trading-post. Now they were by-passed by the East-West traffic handled by the cities on the Via Egnatia. The retired Italian veterans and colonists tended to take a fuller share in the life of the community in these quieter, northern cities. Greek and Jewish inhabitants existed, who continued to use Greek as their language, but such centres grew up, or

were rebuilt, as essentially Roman cities, with the majority of their populations speaking Latin rather than Greek and worshipping a medley of Roman and indigenous gods.

Probably towards the end of the year A.D. 49, a small band of zealots, headed by St Paul, a Jew with Roman citizenship from Tarsus in Cilicia, took ship from Troas in Asia Minor, stopped for a night on Samothrace, and landed the next day at the port of Neapolis, the Kavalla of to-day. From here they immediately took the Via Egnatia, following it over the Symbolon Pass, and came to Philippi, 'the chief city of that part of Macedonia'.[1] They carried the new gospel of Christianity.

Reasons of convenience probably dictated that St Paul, making for Macedonia, should travel by sea, via the great pagan island sanctuary of Samothrace, to Neapolis, and thence to Philippi. Thrace had been conquered only three years earlier and eastern Macedonia was still the terminus of the Via Egnatia and the easternmost point of Roman civilisation in Europe. Yet, in his choice of Macedonia, and particularly of Philippi as the starting-point for bringing the Christian gospel to Europe, Paul was accepting a challenge of no mean order.

It is not easy to sort out the confusing religious picture of Macedonia at the time of St Paul's arrival. Nor would it be accurate to present one characterised by clarity. Each district differed from its neighbour, reflecting the individual peculiarities of its local cultural background and its accessibility to foreign influences.

A Thessalonian coin, dated to the late fourth century B.C., shows that Pallas Athene was worshipped there at the time of the city's foundation. Another early cult was that of Hercules, to whom particular reverence was paid by the Macedonian kings. Pythian Apollo, on whose advice the Parians had colonised Thasos in the eighth century B.C., and whose worship was consequently particularly strong on that island, was also popularly venerated in Thessalonica, and was often associated on coins with one of the Cabiri.

The Cabiri were two deities of whom we have very little clear knowledge. They were associated with the Great Mother Goddess — Axieros, Cybele or Rhea — whose attendants or children they were. Pre-Greek in origin, they were identified by the Greeks with the Dioscuri. The cult of the Cabiri, with that of the Great Goddess, probably arrived from Asia Minor, whence it established itself upon Samothrace, Lemnos and Thasos, with the first-named as its leading sanctuary. Orpheus was said to have been its pupil there, and Philip II and perhaps Alexander the Great to have visited the island to become initiates of its mysteries. Certainly Alexander and his successors were munificent patrons of the Samothracian temples. On Lemnos the Cabiri were the smiths of the Underworld and it is in this quality that a Cabir sometimes appears on Thessalonian coins. They were also gods with special powers of rescue, particularly of seamen, and this aspect seems to have had a particular attraction for the Thessalonians, who adopted them, usually in a single personification, as the divine protectors of their city, regarding them in a somewhat analagous manner to the Tyches or Fortunes of Syrian cities.

On the evidence of coins of the period, other divinities popular among the Thessalonians included Zeus, Perseus, Artemis, Poseidon and Dionysus. Venus, Mars, Janus and Ceres were among those introduced by the Romans. Egyptian gods, too, had their adherents. An inscription refers to the 'Great God Serapis'. The cult of Isis has been revealed by the discovery of a statue of the goddess and the remains of a temple dedicated to her worship which, built during the third century B.C., still apparently warranted repairs in Christian times. The 'Rosalia', an annual floral ceremony or fête in commemoration of the death of Attis was celebrated in Thessalonica and Philippi, but opinions differ as to whether this was due to Roman influence or was an import from the shores of Asia Minor.

Throughout eastern Macedonia, as well as in Thrace itself, the religion of the native Thracians retained an undiminished vitality. Three iconographical aspects of this religion have survived in sufficient number and consistency of representation to leave us some indication of its essential features. These are the goddess Bendis, the Thracian Horseman, and, to a lesser extent, the Funerary Feast.

Bendis, whose worship was introduced to Attica from Thrace following a treaty between Athens and the Thracian king Sitalces in 430 B.C., and who also

[1] Acts of the Apostles xvi, 12.



Fig. 29. BENDIS AS THE DIVINE HUNTRESS. Relief on the Acropolis, Philippi

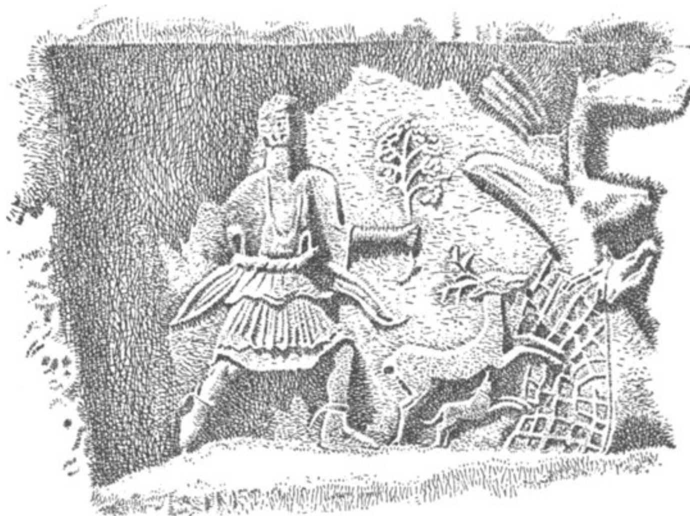


Fig. 30. BENDIS AS THE DIVINE HUNTRESS AND HOLDING AN IVY BRANCH AS GODDESS OF THE UNDERWORLD. Relief on the Acropolis, Philippi

appears in Italy as an Etruscan goddess,[1] possessed four distinct personifications. As a huntress goddess, she was armed with a spear or bow and attended by a hound; in effect, a Thracian equivalent of Artemis-Diana with qualities that indicate a common origin. As a goddess of the underworld and of death, she appeared holding a branch of ivy, introducing a Thracian link into the chain of legends of a 'Golden Bough'. As a moon goddess, portrayed with a crescent moon, she pointed to a relationship with the Great Mother concept that had been introduced to Thrace from Samothrace and Asia Minor and which was also reflected in certain aspects of Artemis-Diana. Finally, as the feminine hypostasis of the Thracian Horseman, Bendis could be presented standing with the serpent and an altar surmounted by a pine or fir cone or a flame.[2]

[1] C. Picard, 'Sur l'iconographie de Bendis', *Sbornik Gabriel Katzarov* (Sofia, 1950), pp. 25-34.

Sometimes one aspect emphasised, sometimes another, Bendis was essentially a deeply rooted expression in pagan terms of Thracian belief in rebirth after death. This was perhaps most obvious in the manifestation of the goddess as a deity of the underworld, the most purely Thracian expression of the four. Here her rites were often associated with Dionysus, to whom she would appear as either wife or mother, and to whom the ivy plant, a symbol of immortal life, was sacred. It was also, however, implicit in her appearance as the immortal huntress or the Great Mother.

Similarly, the Thracian Horseman and the Funerary Feast were symbols of Thracian belief in an afterlife. The latter motif was common to other areas and combined a primitive pagan form of communion

[2] L. Ognenova, 'Some aspects of Bendis on the monuments of Thrace', *Bull. Inst. Arch. Bulgare XXII* (Sofia, 1959), pp. 81-95 (Bulgarian).

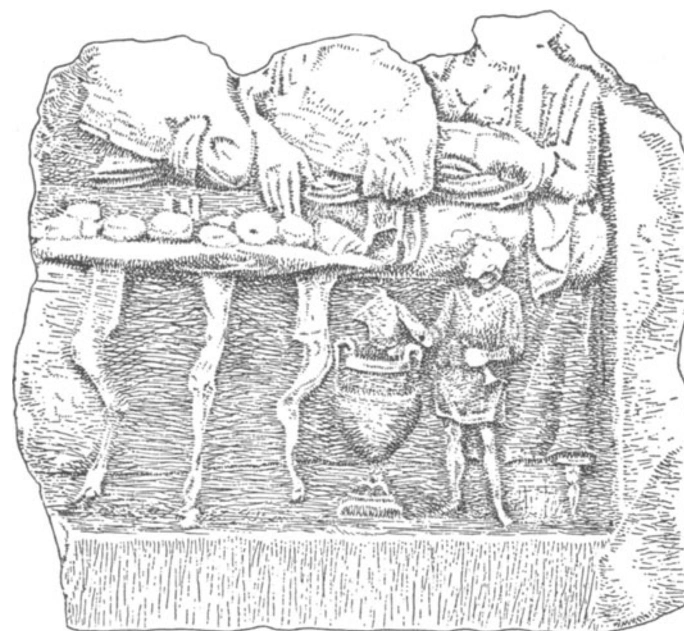


Fig. 31. THRACIAN FUNERARY FEAST. Fragment of a stele re-used in reconstruction of the 'Extra Muros' Basilica, Philippi

rite with the symbolic provision of food for the deceased. Probably, as Evans has suggested in connection with Mycenaean steles, these sepulchral monuments were originally regarded as baetylic habitations of the departed spirits.[1] The Thracian Horseman, on the other hand, containing elements that are peculiar to Thrace, remains an enigma that still awaits a satisfactory explanation; but some account of it, however tentative, is essential if we are considering the possible legacies of paganism inherited by Christianity in Thrace and eastern Macedonia.

Although the concept of a mounted god or hero occurs elsewhere in the Ancient and indeed in the Modern World (Pls. 4, 6, 7, Figs. 33-37), the large numbers of such monuments discovered in Thrace, all bearing the sign of a clearly defined iconographical tradition, indicate that here it enjoyed a position of exceptional importance. Kazarow reports the existence of over a thousand in Bulgaria [2] and Collart some thirty between the Nestos and the Strymon in the neighbourhood of Philippi.[3] Yet outside territories once inhabited by Thracian tribes it immediately becomes rare and a short distance away is not to be found.

The Thracian Horseman monuments may be either funerary or votive. In the form that has survived to the present day, they are invariably relief carvings on marble or stone. They are small in size, seldom exceeding 0.40 metres in width or height (unless the great rock relief at Madara (Pl. 7*b*) is considerably earlier than the ninth-century inscriptions beside it). Its two main iconographic types belong to two different periods. In the earlier, the Horseman is presented as a Heroic Hunter. Bareheaded, dressed in a short tunic and a chlamys which flies behind him in the wind, he gallops, almost always from left to right, towards a tree, around which a serpent is entwined. His right hand is raised and holds a spear or other weapon as if about to strike his quarry. A dog crouches beneath the horse, ready to attack a boar emerging from behind or from the roots of the tree. In the second and later iconographic type the dog and boar are omitted. Sometimes wearing a wreath on his head and sometimes clad in Roman military dress, the Horseman rides in a stately, ceremonial manner towards the serpent-entwined tree, before which now stands an altar surmounted by a pine or fir cone. No longer a Heroic Hunter, the Horseman has become a High Priest or a semi-divine personage participating in a solemn religious ceremony.

A number of variations occur in both types. In the first, examples have been noted in which the boar is omitted and, instead of a spear, the Hunter's right hand grasps what appears to be a deer or goat at which two dogs leap from below. In a small number of cases the dog and boar together with an altar may appear on a single relief. In the second type, a person, perhaps a servant, is sometimes shown walking behind the Horseman; a seated or standing woman may replace the tree and serpent, and a child even be shown standing upon the altar. Crowding of the scene, however, generally signifies a late and degenerate form. Such examples, which, it would seem, depict living relatives of the deceased, should not be confused with the simple presentation of the Horseman and a seated woman in a clear priest-goddess relationship.

Although these and other exceptions must not be left out of account, the iconography of the two main types is so consistent, despite very varying workmanship, that it may be considered as symbolising a fundamental Thracian religious tenet, which was even strong enough to survive the introduction of new ideas and religious concepts following the Roman conquest of A.D. 46. The presence of these foreign influences in the later type means that it is primarily to the earlier that we must look to provide the surest clues to a satisfactory interpretation. Our first step is, if possible, to identify the Horseman. From the votive nature of the inscriptions accompanying some of the monuments it is clear that it would be wrong to regard him as simply an idealised portrait of a deceased relative, although in a less direct form this concept need not necessarily be entirely absent.

Throughout the latter half of the first millennium B.C. Thrace's principal neighbouring civilisations

[1] A. Evans, *Mycenean Tree and Pillar Cult* (London, 1901), p. 21.

[2] G. I. Kazarow, *Die Denkmäler des Thrakischen Reitergottes in Bulgarien* (Budapest, 1938).

[3] P. Collart, *op. cit.* p. 299, n. 1.

were Greek, Scythian and Celtic. The last was in a process of eruption and partial disintegration and, as far as can be seen, was then contributing little to Thracian development. On the other hand, particularly during the third quarter of the millennium, Greece and Scythia, both powerful possessors of mature cultures, were in a state of expansion. It was a formative period in the history of the Thracian tribes, who were beginning to achieve a rudimentary form of national consciousness. Greek and Scythian cults that reflected indigenous religious aspirations were thus well situated to exert considerable influence.

One such cult from Greece was that of Asklepios (Aesculapius). Born of Apollo and a mortal mother, he became renowned for his powers of healing and even of restoring the dead to life. Eventually Zeus, fearing that he might enable men to escape death altogether, struck him dead with a thunderbolt; but afterwards, on the request of Apollo, granted him the attributes of divinity. Farnell writes:

> His incarnation is the snake, at Epidauros, Kos and Rome, and the snake-rod becomes the symbol of the physician; but this mysterious beast was equally the familiar of the buried hero and of the nether-god. The case is different with the other animal that we now know to have stood in a somewhat mystic relation to him — namely the dog. In many of his shrines we have evidence of the maintenance of sacred dogs, in Epidauros, Athens, Lebena in Crete, and finally in Rome; and at Epidauros at least the animal was possessed of the divine power of the god and was able to work miraculous cures by licking the patient. . . . It is probable that already in Thessaly, the original home of the cult, the animal was closely associated with Asklepios; for on a bronze coin of the Magnetes of the second century B.C. we see him at the feet of the god.[1]

Asklepios was also one of the heroes who participated in the great boar hunt of Calydon (Pl. 6*a*).

At a spring renowned for its healing qualities at Glava Panega in Bulgaria, Asklepios was worshipped in association with, and was even to some extent identified with, the Thracian Horseman. Thracian Horseman reliefs have been found there with dedications to Asklepios, and other reliefs which portray Asklepios alone or with Hygeia.[2] There were probably many such shrines, for towards the end of the pre-Christian period, the cult of Asklepios came 'to overshadow the whole Graeco-Roman world; and when at last vanquished by Christianity it left its impress on the vanquisher'.[3] Its strength in Rome may be an explanation of the easy evolution of the second iconographic type of the Thracian Horseman, in which a compromise was reached between the earlier Hunter cult and the more sophisticated religious practices of Rome.

Asklepios, although especially associated with the serpent, the dog and boar, shared some of his attributes with other gods and heroes, among them his father, Apollo. Another was Attis, with whom a boar figured in the myths concerning his symbolism of rebirth. Consequently, in acknowledging points of similarity between Asklepios and the Thracian Horseman we must not exclude the possibility of other Greek influences. The boar, it must be remembered, was also sacred to Artemis and, among the Indo-European peoples generally, was regarded as a chthonic or infernal beast.

The horse and the tree, iconographically as essential as the rider and persisting for longer than the dog and the boar, loom less strongly in Greek religion, although they are not entirely foreign to it. On the other hand, the nature of Thrace's Scythian neighbours offers a plausible explanation for the horse. Horses not only bore Scythian warriors to battle and were an important feature of their nomad economy, they were, as we have seen on page 19, interred, often in large numbers, inside the burial mounds of dead chieftains. Thracian princes affected a similar form of burial and Rostovtzeff has drawn attention to the close similarities in the contents and ritualistic observances of Scythian and Thracian tombs.

> We are astonished [he writes] to find that the horse trappings are almost the same in the Thracian tombs and in the tombs of South Russia. We find the same pieces; frontlet, ear-guards, temple-pieces, nasal; the same Oriental practice of covering nearly the whole bridle with metal plaques; the same system of bits. Further, the two types of bridle ornament: round

[1] L. R. Farnell, *Greek Hero Cults and Ideas of Immortality* (Oxford, 1921), pp. 240–1.

[2] N. Vulić, *Spomenik xcviii*, 1941–48 (Belgrade), pp. 281–6.

[3] L. R. Farnell, *op. cit.* p. 234.

plaques embossed in the Greek manner; and plaques in the form of animals, cast and incised in the Oriental fashion. Lastly, and this is the most important of all: all the pieces in the animal style find striking parallels in the Scythian horse trappings from Scythian tombs of the fourth and third centuries . . . some of these are almost duplicates.[1]

If Scythian influence was as strong as this evidence of the Thracian mound burials implies, it would have been unnatural indeed to have portrayed otherwise than mounted a god, a hero or even a dead relative to whom respect was being accorded.

Nevertheless, the horse would not have become a fundamental item of Thracian funerary iconography simply through a tendency to copy Scythian customs. It had been generally regarded as an animal with divine attributes by the Indo-European peoples and, as we have already noted in Chapter I, the solar chariot was a symbol shared by Greece, Rome, Persia and India. Salin has summarised the symbolism of the horse in terms which, although intended to be general, are fully applicable to the reliefs of the Thracian Horseman:

> Companion of the nomad, the horse, after the cervidae it succeeded, was taken by him as a totem at a time when zoomorphism preceded anthropomorphism. But he is also the companion of the dead man, whom he accompanies into the tomb for the supreme journey: the myth originates from the burial of the dead with the horse (or chariot); it will not be limited to one people, one religion or one age. . . . In the first place, in fact, it (the horse) is the sacred animal of those religions which are essentially chthonian; represented alone, it is the image of death. But it also evokes the presence of the dead man beside whom it was buried; it protects him; and finally becomes confused with him: as the mount of the heroised horseman, it bears him on a posthumous ride towards the empyrean, the sun or the moon.
>
> Thus the horse becomes a symbol of immortality; from being chthonian it becomes uranian, and with this conception are associated the allegorical designs linking or substituting for one another the horse and the bird, opposing the horse to the serpent according to a symbolism which evokes the eternal combat of two opposed powers: the sky and the earth.
>
> In short, the horse, whose power is on the frontier of two worlds, appears as the protector both of the living and the dead. . . .
>
> The horse is a mount for the hunter who fights against monsters — and this is the victory of Good over Evil; but he also leads the infernal hunt 'in which the Beyond is let loose', which may make the horse a demon. Thus it is sometimes beneficent and sometimes maleficent.[2]

The tree poses a wide and a particularly confusing range of questions. Does it represent the Tree of Life? Is the serpent entwined around its trunk linked with the Oriental myth that gave us the story of the Garden of Eden — here expressing a Thracian combination of Greek and Oriental ideas of rebirth? Is it a relic of tree worship, a widespread form of primitive religion particularly among the Celtic peoples with whom Thrace had close contacts and whose period of cultural influence antedated that of the Scythians? Does some connection exist between it and the ancient oak grove oracle of Zeus at Dodona? Or has it Mycenean associations? Mycenae and Mycenean Crete, where the serpent was also sacred, provide precedents of religious ceremonies in which a human figure approaches a sacred tree to pluck its fruit. Discussing a gold signet ring (Fig. 32) from a Mycenae chamber tomb, Evans comments:

> The subject will be best understood if we regard it as divided into separate scenes. To the right, the Goddess is thrown into an ecstatic state by the fruit of her sacred tree, a branch of which is here again pulled down



Fig. 32. MYCENEAN SIGNET RING SHOWING THE GODDESS WITH A WORSHIPPER AND THE SACRED TREE

[1] M. Rostovtzeff, *Iranians and Greeks in South Russia* (Oxford, 1922), p. 89.

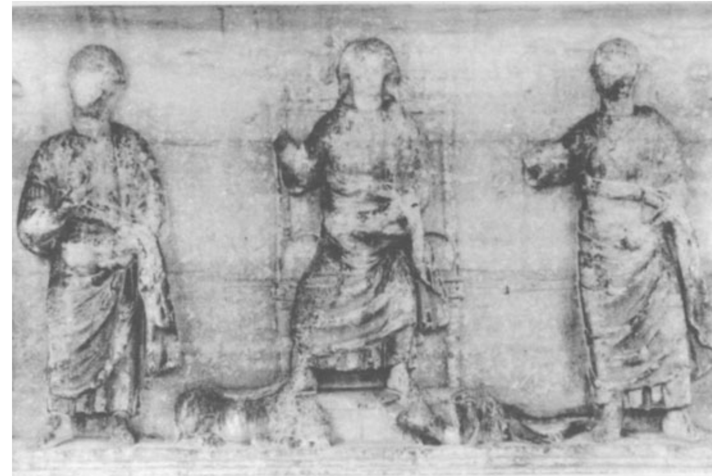
[2] E. Salin, *La Civilisation mérovingienne* (Paris, 1959), vol. iv, pp. 148-9 (trans.).



a. Daniel and the Lions. Sarcophagus, *circa* fifth century. *National Museum, Revenna*



b. The Cross and the Lambs. Sarcophagus, *circa* fifth century. Ravenna



c. Christ, the lion and serpent at His feet, with SS. Peter and Paul. Pignatta sarcophagus, probably Constantinopolitan origin, *circa* fifth century, Ravenna



d. 'Traditio Legis'. Sarcophagus, *circa* fifth century. *National Museum, Ravenna*



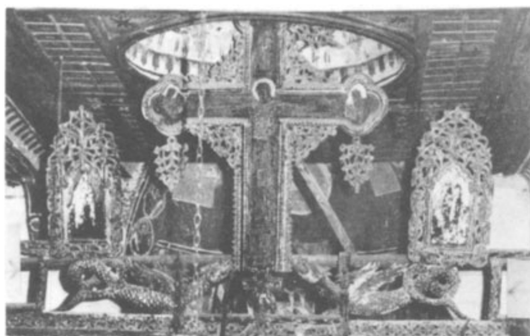
e. Peacocks at the Source of Life. Eleventh century chancel slab. Cathedral of Torcello



f. Virgin and Child with two Archangels. This symbol or the Deisis were generally preferred to the Crucifixion in the Byzantine Church. Church of the Panaghia Mavriotissia, Kastoria, Macedonia. Twelfth century



g. Virgin and Child on a Lion Throne attended by saints. Wall hanging, 1300–50. *Historical Museum, Bern*



h. The Cross with Dragons and Saints. Nineteenth century superstructure of the iconostasis in the Church of St. George, Kastoria, Macedonia



i. Episcopal Throne. Church of St. Clement, Ohrid, Macedonia. Detail showing one of the lions at the feet of the throne. Nineteenth century

5 VARIATIONS ON THE THEME OF THE SOURCE OF ETERNAL LIFE IN CHRISTIAN ICONOGRAPHY



a. The Calydonian Boar Hunt. Sarcophagus, Pisa



b. Horseman and Goddess. Funerary stele, Thasos



c. Horseman and Goddess. Fifth century B.C. textile found at Pazirik, Altai, Central Asia. *Hermitage Museum, Leningrad*



e. Thracian Horseman. *In author's possession*



f. Thracian Horseman. *Beaney Institute Museum, Canterbury*



d. Thracian Horseman. Coin of Thracian king Seuthes I. *British Museum*



g. Thracian Horseman. *Archaeological Museum, Thessalonica*



h. Thracian Horseman. *Beaney Institute Museum, Canterbury*



i. Thracian Horseman. *Archaeological Museum, Thessalonica*



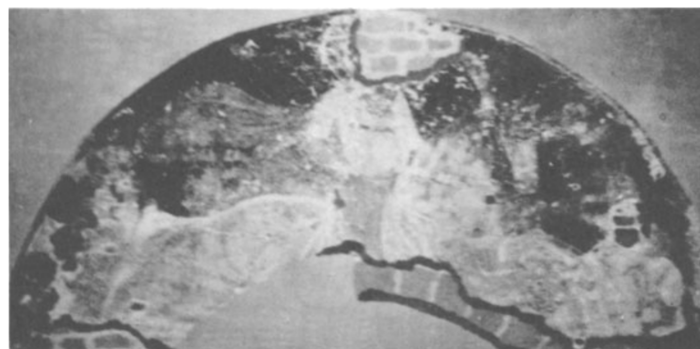
a. Arsu, Syrian god and patron of caravans



b. Heroic Hunter. Rock relief, Madara, Bulgaria



c. Horseman and Goddess. Detail of nineteenth century Russian embroidery of traditional design. *Historical Museum, Moscow*





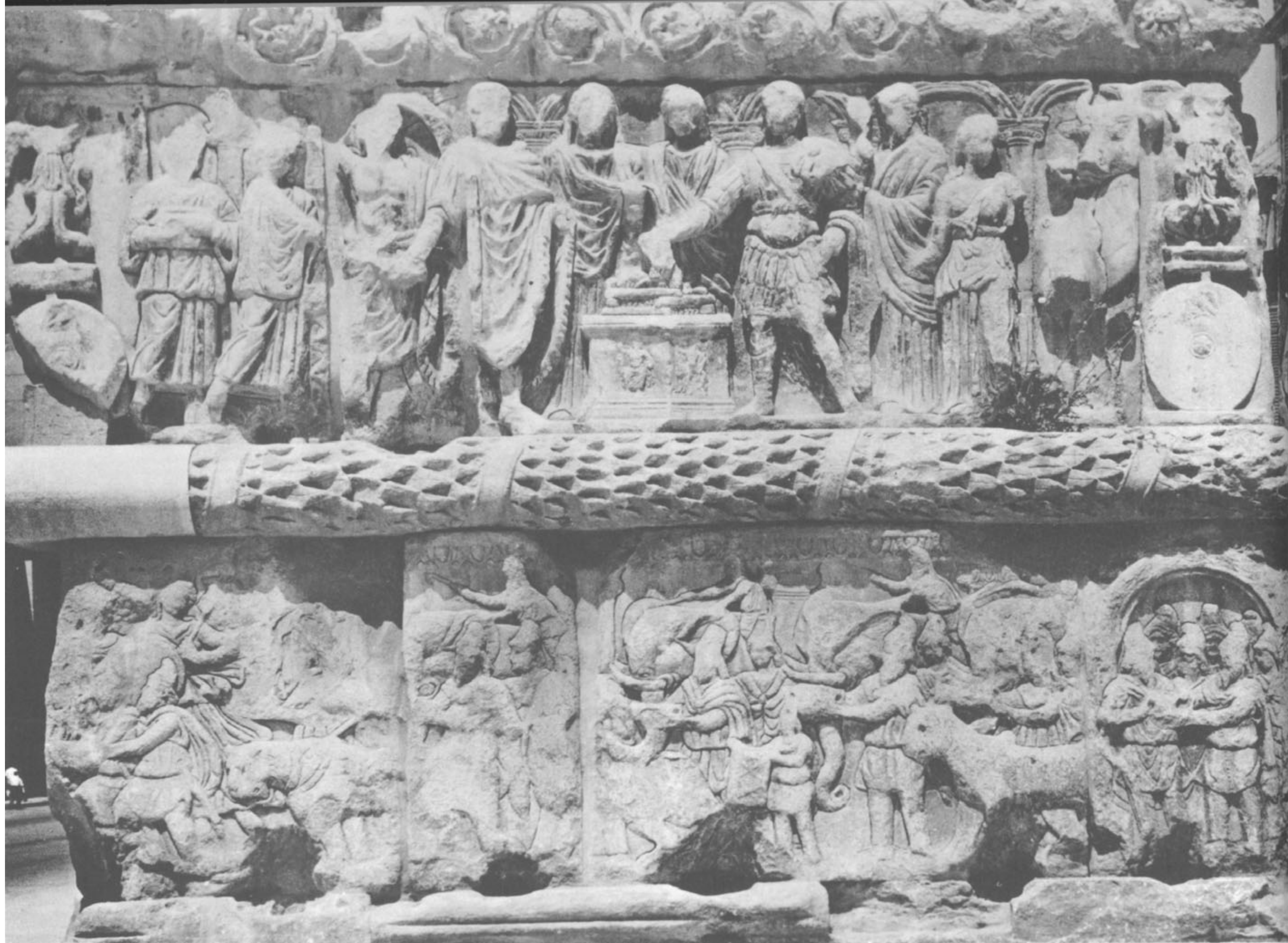
d. St George. Twelfth century wall painting, Djurdjevi Stupovi, Serbia



e. St George. Fourteenth century sculpture, Decani Monastery, Serbia



f. St George. Early nineteenth century woodcarving on the iconostasis of the Church of Sveti Spas, Skopje



DETAIL OF THE TRIUMPHAL ARCH OF GALERIUS, THESSALONICA

The Arch was erected sometime during the first five years of the fourth century to celebrate the victories of Galerius during his eastern campaigns. In the centre of the upper panel, Galerius, in military attire, stands to the right of an altar, which is decorated with representations of Zeus and Hercules. Galerius is offering a sacrifice of thanksgiving for his victories while the Emperor Diocletian stands on the left of the altar watching him. Two women stand behind the altar and an inscription 'OIKH' indicates that one or both of them are intended to symbolise the universe. Another inscription, 'EH', identifies a third woman, standing to the right of Galerius, as a symbol of the Peace which Galerius has brought to the Universe. Behind her, farther to the right, appear another woman and a bull. The latter may be connected with the sacrifice; it was also, however, a customary attribute of the Syrian God Hadad. Scenes descriptive of Galerius's eastern campaigns fill the lower panel, prominence being given to elephants and lions. At the extreme right a group of Persian notables hold gifts before an arched gateway

> for her by the male attendant. The other side of the subject depicts a similar figure in a mourning attitude, leaning over a little enclosure within which stands a small baetylic pillar while from the upper part of the balustrade is suspended a diminutive Minoan shield, seen in profile, clearly belonging to the youthful personage. . . . We seem in these cases, indeed, to have actual illustrations of an aspect of the religion so prominent in the later cult of Adonis and Attis, the child or favourite of the Goddess, cut off before his prime by some untoward accident which in Crete, as in Syria, seems also to have been due to a wild boar.[1]

In the light of our present knowledge we can do little more than guess at the symbolism of the snake-entwined tree. That it implies Greek influence seems likely, for on reliefs from the remoter parts of Thraco-Moesia it is frequently omitted.

So far we have been considering the potential impact of foreign influences, but these must not obscure the most clearly evident fact of all — the essentially national character of the monument. Can we find a native Thracian figure — man, hero or god — capable of amalgamating Greek, Scythian and other ideas into a Thracian mould?

Casson has pointed out that the Horseman cult 'seems in origin to have some sort of connection with the legend of Rhesus . . . a great Thracian hero whose very presence inspires awe and fills the air with splendour and the clash of arms'.[2] Rhesus was the semi-divine son of the River Strymon and one of the Muses. A mighty warrior, famous for the beauty and fleetness of his white horses, he arrives belatedly at Troy as an ally of the Trojans, after delays due to Scythian wars on his northern borders. According to Homer and as dramatised by Euripides, he was slain in his sleep by Odysseus and Diomedes, son of Tydeus, on the night of his arrival and was buried on the fields of Troy.

The most remarkable passage in Euripides' play, suggests Porter, is the 'allusive and obscure' prophecy by Rhesus' mother of a posthumous existence for the dead hero that was quite alien to Homeric tradition (vv. 962–73). The passage is translated thus:

> He shall not descend into the dark earth; this much I beg of the Nether Bride, daughter of Demeter, the goddess who giveth the fruits of the earth, to send up his soul from the dead. And she is my debtor to show manifest honour to the kinsfolk of Orpheus. And although to me he shall be as dead henceforth and as one who sees not the light, for neither shall he meet me any more nor look upon his mother's face, yet he shall lie concealed in the caverns of the silver-bearing land, a Spirit-Man, beholding the light, even as the seer of Bacchus made his habitation in Pangaeum's rock, a god revered by those who understand.[3]

From a Greek writer comes an interesting epilogue to the Trojan episode. We are told by Polyaenus that Hagnon, attempting to found an Athenian colony at Amphipolis in 437–436 B.C., sent an expedition to Troy to bring back the bones of the Thracian hero in order to bury them within the precincts of the colony, presumably as an act of propitiation to the local gods or to impress the fierce Thracian tribes of the neighbourhood. A coin of Seuthes I, King of Odrysian Thrace 424–405 B.C., which bears a Thracian Horseman on the obverse, shows that the symbol — and, in consequence, whatever myth it represented — had become a factor in the national consciousness before the end of the fifth century B.C. (Pl. *6d*). Four centuries later, in a somewhat more sophisticated form, it was appearing on coins of the Hellenistic kingdom of Bactria (Fig. 33).

Among the Thracians a primitive legend seems to have existed that Rhesus was killed in Thrace fighting the savage Diomedes, son of Ares, perhaps a reflection of the wars between the Thracians and the first Greek settlers.[4] Philostratus, writing in the first half of the third century A.D., speaks of a shrine of Rhesus on Mount Rhodope. Although he accepts Homer's version of the Thracian hero's death, he implies a local ignorance of it:

> Rhesus, whom Diomedes slew at Troy, is said to inhabit Rhodope, and they recount many wondrous deeds of his; for they say that he breeds horses, and marches in armour, and hunts wild beasts; and, in proof that the hero is a hunter, they tell how the wild

[1] A. Evans, *The Earlier Religion of Greece in the Light of Cretan Discoveries* (London, 1931), p. 31.

[2] S. Casson, *Macedonia, Thrace and Illyria* (Oxford, 1926), p. 248.

[3] W. H. Porter (ed.), *Euripides: Rhesus* (Cambridge, 1916), p. xvii.

[4] W. H. Porter, *op. cit.* p. xxv; Pauly-Wissowa, *Real-Encyclop., s.v.* Diomedes.



a



b

Fig. 33. BACTRIAN COINS SHOWING THE KING ON HORSEBACK
a. Tetradrachm of Sotiros Hippostratos, *circa* 50–30 B.C. *b.* Tetradrachm of Azes I, *circa* 30 B.C. (Twice actual size)

boar and gazelles and all the beasts of the mountain come by twos and threes to the altar of Rhesus, and are offered in sacrifice, unbound and unfettered, and yield themselves to the knife; and this hero is said to ward off plague from his borders.[1]

The concept of a legendary king, a father figure of his race and so developed into a heroic or semi-divine ancestor of the whole Thracian people, is in fundamental accord with the view expressed by Vulić that the Thracian Horseman is 'an ancestor, a heroised ancestor, or, still more likely, heroised ancestors'.[2] To such could be attributed all the qualities which the Thracians considered appropriate to a god and with him every Thracian could identify himself in his anticipated after-life when, with the Hero's aid, death could be vanquished. It was a natural corollary, to which the accretion of the Asklepian attributes could have made an important contribution, that such a hero might be expected to provide certain forms of protection during the mortal existence of his followers. That these mortal forms included defence as well as healing is shown by inscriptions in which the epithet *προπυλαίος* is used to invoke the Horseman's aid, and by the incorporation of Horseman tablets in fortified city gateways.[3]

Thus, it is likely that the Thracian Horseman was a composite figure, essentially Thracian and centred on the legendary personality of King Rhesus, but to which Greek, Scythian and probably other myths made important contributions. On the basis of our present knowledge it would probably be unwise to attempt a much closer definition or, indeed, even to regard this suggested identity as more than tentative.

Three related iconographic forms, which, although present in Thrace, were rather symbols of similar concepts developed by neighbouring peoples, are worth noting briefly for the perspective in which they place the Thracian Horseman for us. The first presents a Horseman, his right hand raised, advancing towards a seated female goddess who holds a leafy branch. This scene is reproduced almost identically on a Thasian stele (Pl. 6*b*), considered by Collart to be the assimilation of two heroised dead into the Heroic Horseman-Dionysus and Bendis-Persephone,[4] and on a Scythian textile from the *circa* fifth century B.C. grave at Pazarik in the Altai (Pl. 6*c*). It appears again on a gold finger ring found in a Thracian mound tomb at Brezovo, near Plovdiv in Bulgaria. Here an intaglio design represents a mounted horseman facing a draped female figure who holds out a rhyton. Rostovtzeff explains this scene as a royal investiture or holy communion and comments that it is common on objects from fourth- or third-century Scythian tombs in South Russia.[5] Horseman reliefs bearing a female figure are relatively common in Bulgaria and, despite identifications with Asklepios and Hygeia, there

[1] W. H. Porter, *op. cit.* p. xxv.

[2] N. Vulić, *op. cit.* pp. 281–6.

[3] S. Casson, *op. cit.* pp. 251–3; P. Collart, *op. cit.* p. 468; G. Seure, 'Études sur quelques types curieux du Cavalier Thrace', *Revue des Études Anciennes*, xiv, 1912, p. 382, *et seq.*

[4] P Collart, *op. cit.* p. 437.

[5] M. Rostovtzeff, *op. cit.* p. 89.

the symbol may indicate a closer relationship with Scythian than Hellenic origins. An analogous form appears in East Syria. In the Semitic example illustrated in Pl. 7*a* sun and moon symbols and a flaming altar are substituted for the goddess, and Arsu, the god of caravans, is the hero, here riding a camel. Parthian reliefs from the same region show the hero-god on horseback advancing towards an altar beside which stands a male god. In the relief from Khirbet-el-Hamam the god holds out a wreath.[1]

The second iconographic form is that found in south-west Asia Minor of Artemis flanked by the mounted Dioscuri (Pl. 4*c*). Evidence of this cult has been found at Stobi (Fig. 34) and elsewhere in Macedonia. Here, as in the Louvre stele displaying opposing Horsemen with dogs separated by a serpent-entwined tree (Fig. 35), it achieved a degree of integration with that of the Thracian Horseman. However, reliefs of dual Horsemen are relatively rare in the areas where the population contained a strong Thracian element, a point which leads us to wonder if the Thracian symbol of a single Heroic Horseman may have played a significant part in Thessalonica's insistence upon a single personification of the Cabiri.

The third related form is that usually known as the Danubian Horseman. Here either two opposed

[1] *The Excavations at Dura Europos* (Preliminary Report of Sixth Session) (New Haven, 1936), pp. 228-38 and Pl. xxx.



a



b



c



Fig. 34. GODDESS AND MOUNTED DIOSCURI. Fragment of a relief found at Stobi



Fig. 35. SERPENT-ENTWINED TREE AND MOUNTED DIOSCURI. Funeral stele in the Louvre, Paris

Fig. 36. DANUBIAN HORSEMEN RELIEFS *a*. Stele divided horizontally. *b*. Stele framed by arch; including representation of the Sun god and quadriga. *c*. Engraved stone

Horsemen flank a Mother Goddess, as in the Pisidian Artemis (Pl. 4*c*), or a single one rides towards her; but a customary feature is a recumbent man beneath the hooves of each horse. Usually the Danubian Horseman appears on steles accompanied by a hotch-potch of other expressions of beliefs in immortality (Figs. 36*a*–*c*). Like Ephesian and Pisidian Artemis, its origin is Asiatic rather than Hellenic and its iconography should not be confused with the well-known stele of Dexileos, where the figure of a rider striking down a barbarian figure beneath his horse's hooves probably represents a triumphant episode from the deceased man's life rather than a deeply rooted religious symbol. Such Greek sculptures as this stele and others of a like nature undoubtedly exerted a stylistic influence on the iconography of the Thracian Horseman — many of the finer examples of which may be attributed to Greek craftsmen — but style and concept must not be confused. More akin to the Horseman is the relief from Messene in the Louvre showing the Hunt (not the victory) of Alexander (Fig. 37). The victorious action of the Danubian Horsemen may be a reflection of that dualism inherent in the Iranian religion of which many of the inhabitants of the Danube valley were distant followers.

Along the imperial frontiers garrisoned by legions which included troops from Thrace and Asia Minor and, occasionally, within Thracian territory, a Horseman, stylistically recognisable as of the Thracian type but trampling a defeated warrior beneath his horse's hooves, appears on funerary steles. None of these examples, three of which occur at Philippi, possess the remaining iconographical features of the Thracian Horseman reliefs. Sometimes, as at Hexham in Northumberland, the triumphant Horseman is hardly recognisable as Thracian and perhaps has no connection. In an example preserved at Gloucester, however, the deceased is not only stylistically presented as a Thracian type, but is identified in the accompanying inscription as a Thracian cavalryman. In spite of this, the figure we see is that of a Roman soldier victorious over his barbarian adversary. It is in the tradition of Dexileos rather than the Thracian Horseman and, if any form of religious symbolism is present, it has little relationship with that of either Thrace or Greece.



Fig. 37. HUNT OF ALEXANDER
Relief from Messene in the Louvre, Paris

Whatever else is open to doubt, the Thracian Horseman symbolised a powerful Thracian religious concept. Did it then leave an impression upon Christianity, either in association with cults such as that of Asklepios or in a more specifically Thracian form?

The major Christian hero of Byzantine Thessalonica and its neighbourhood was St Demetrius, whose divine attributes, as we shall see when discussing the Slav invasions and the Basilica of St Demetrius, were healing and the protection of his followers. The cult centre of the saint was situated in the crypt of the basilica of St Demetrius in Thessalonica, the alleged scene of his martyrdom. He was claimed in similar terms by the Danubian city of Sirmium, although we lack details of his cult centre there. This plurality of cult centre and use of a crypt is paralleled in the cult of Asklepios, of which Farnell comments:

> There was always great resemblance between the ritual at a buried hero's tomb and that at the underground shrine of the earth deity or daimon; therefore in certain cases it might be hard to determine whether the personage belonged to one or the other class; and in the shifting popular tradition the one could easily be transformed into the other. . . . And here and there in the records of the ritual we may detect other chthonian features; at Trikka, according to the hymn of Isullos, the shrine was a nether 'aduton', and the subterranean structure may have prevailed elsewhere, accounting for the rise of a legend that such and such communities possessed the tomb of Asklepios.[1]

[1] L. R. Farnell, *op. cit.* p. 237.

At the outset of his spiritual existence as a Christian hero, St Demetrius was a divine hero in the pure Asklepian tradition and not a Christianised version of the Thracian Horseman. This was not surprising in such a predominantly Greek city as Thessalonica and in view of the pacific temper of Early Christianity. On the other hand, he was never accorded the serpent and dog as sacred animals. Were these discredited as being too obviously pagan symbols? Nevertheless, we shall see when discussing the mosaics of the Basilica of St Demetrius that within a couple of centuries and probably earlier the saint had entered into mystic relationships with the Virgin and with a 'lady Evtaxia' comparable with those of Asklepios and Hygeia, the Thracian Horseman and Bendis, the Cabiri and the Great Mother Goddess, Dionysus and Persephone, Attis and Cybele, Apollo and the Earth Mother Goddess, the Scythian Horseman and the Great Goddess and their many variations. Perhaps this swing towards a relationship with a goddess was an indication of the influences from Asia Minor which were always strong in Macedonian religion, whether Christian or pagan, and which the Semitic fervour of St Paul only temporarily succeeded in replacing with a monotheism that was purely masculine. (In a discussion of Delphic cultural traditions, Dyggve suggests that the earlier Apollo-Earth Mother Goddess relationship at that centre was transformed into one between John the Baptist and the Virgin, and recalls that scented water was a feature of the pagan cult as well as of that of St Demetrius in Thessalonica.[1]) Not until later, when the danger to Thessalonica from the Avars and Slavs became acute, did St Demetrius assume in a most splendid and effective manner all the apotropaic powers earlier attributed to the Cabiri and to the Thracian Horseman. Significantly, in Greek iconography he remained unmounted; but the Slavs, with their ancient Scythian traditions, were quick to picture him on horseback.

Yet among the Slavs it was Cappadocian St George, rather than the Thessalonian hero St Demetrius, who inherited the iconographical form of the Thracian Horseman (Pl. 7*d*-*f*), as he did elsewhere those of Bellerophon, Perseus and other heroes. If Galerius's Rotunda was dedicated to St George from its earliest period as a Christian church, this saint may originally have been a rival of St Demetrius for the role of Thessalonica's Christian hero. The city's fierce civic patriotism probably weighed the scales in favour of the local Greek martyr, but beyond the immediate environs a different situation prevailed. In the deeply rooted local traditions of a Heroic Horseman the Slavs found even centuries later the prototype for a hero in whom they could personify their own ideals. This Slav symbol took either the form of the mediaeval Serbian legendary hero Marko, whose character included barbaric aspects as well as idealism, but who was ready with his horse Sharatz to rise and ride to the assistance of his people in their time of need,[2] or that of St George, the champion of Christian virtue against the dragon, locally a synthesis of the boar and serpent as elsewhere it had succeeded such monsters as the Chimaera.

An important Serbian example of the influence of the Thracian Horseman in Christian iconography appears in the badly damaged wall painting of St George in the ruins of Djurdjevi Stupovi (the Towers of St George) (*circa* 1168), one of the first churches to be built by the Serbian king Stefan Nemanja (Pl. 7*d*). Sotiriou cites a mediaeval wooden icon of St George found at Thracian Heraclea as another example of local association of the two. He describes it as coarse local art and points out that with the horse's movement, the saint's cushioned hair and short trousers, it is more like the Thracian hero than St George fighting the dragon or any of the other saints portrayed in late Byzantine art.[3] Even in the figure of St George on the nineteenth-century iconostasis of the church of Sveti Spas in Skopje (Pl. 7*f*) the iconography has undergone remarkably little change.

Finally, we may note a non-iconographical point mentioned by Vulić in his study of the Thracian Horseman. At Glava Panega, the healing spring

[1] E. Dyggve, '*Les Traditions cultuelles de Delphes et l'Église chrétienne*', Cahiers Archéologiques, iii (Paris, 1948), pp. 15-16 and 28, n. 1.

[2] D. Srejović, *Les Anciens Éléments balkaniques dans la figure de Marko Kraljević* (Živa Antika, VIII, vol. 1, Skopje, 1958), pp. 75-97.

[3] G. A. Sotiriou, *La Sculpture sur bois dans l'art byzantin*, in *Mélanges Charles Diehl* (Paris, 1930), vol. 2, p. 177.

where the reliefs of Asklepios and the Thracian Horseman were discovered together, as late as 1907 peasants were still making pilgrimages to seek cures for their illnesses on St George's Day.[1]

Thrace itself maintained a peculiar hold over Western imagination. Richard Johnson, in his sixteenth-century blend of ancient and mediaeval legend, *The Seven Champions of Christendom*, apportions major Thracian adventures to SS. Anthony, Andrew and Patrick. Moreover, after the more obviously fanciful details have been deducted, his descriptions of the country and its inhabitants are not without some relation to fact. It is of interest, too, to note parallels in Mummers' plays that were still being performed in England in the first half of this century with similarly extant Macedonian versions of the St George legend.[2]

At the western edge of the plain of Philippi rises Mount Pangaeus, dominating the surrounding countryside. To its thickly wooded, mysteriously folded slopes and brooding peaks, legend attributed the birthplace of Dionysus. This part of eastern Macedonia had been one of the earliest centres of Dionysian worship, which perhaps spread from here to Greece. Developed locally as a Thraco-Hellenic cult, it profoundly influenced the religious thought of Greek and Thracian alike. The latter associated Dionysus with their belief in an after-life, not only in connection with Bendis, but, as can be seen on steles at Melnik and Thasos, sometimes actually identifying him with the Heroic Hunter. Inscriptions of the Roman period found in the neighbourhood of Philippi prove the existence of '*thiasi*', Dionysian brotherhoods of a mystical character whose membership included Romans but were for the most part Thracian. Among these inscriptions is a child's epitaph in late Latin which speaks of the bliss that awaited Dionysiacs in their future life.

In the shadow of Mount Pangaeus, itself an ever-present reminder of the ancient god, the worship of Dionysus presented a formidable adversary to Christianity. How strong must have been the atmosphere of paganism then can be glimpsed in the fact that even to-day one may climb the acropolis of the nearby island of Thasos and find in a grove of ancient olives a rock sanctuary dedicated to Pan, still (in 1958), after more than two millennia, undefiled by the carved initials of vandal sightseers. In the time of Paul, the older gods were not legends but a living, present force. Although the Roman colonists of Philippi had imported their own gods, it seems that not even Roman prestige and a population, the most powerful classes of which were Roman, influenced the religious beliefs of the indigenous inhabitants to any appreciable extent. Rather was it the reverse.

At a much earlier period, cults originating from Asia Minor and Egypt had attained an enduring place in the religious life of eastern Macedonia. Most prominent among them were the Great Mother Goddess (but not, as far as is known, the Cabiri) from Asia Minor and Samothrace, and Isis, Serapis, and Horus-Harpocrates from Egypt. But these had introduced no new religious principle in any way antagonistic to the indigenous beliefs. All shared, as a fundamental principle, a belief that the faithful would be rewarded by rebirth into Paradise. In some respects, these cults had prepared the way for Christianity, but they also presented grave dangers. Paul had probably sound reasons for adding to his epistle to the Philippians a warning note telling them to 'beware of evil workers'.[1] And, with psychological genius he presented an ethical, Christian alternative to the *thiasi*:

> Rejoice in the Lord alway ; and again I say, Rejoice.
> Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.
> Be careful for nothing ; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.
> And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.
> Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report ; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things . . . and the God of Peace shall be with you.[2]

The Acts of the Apostles give the following description of Paul's first visit to Macedonia:

[1] N. Vulić, *op. cit.* p. 284.
[2] G. F. Abbott, *Macedonian Folklore* (London, 1903).

[1] Philippians iii, 2.
[2] Philippians iv, 4-9.

Therefore loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia, and the next day to Neapolis;

And from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony: and we were in that city abiding certain days.

And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither.

And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us; whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.

And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, 'If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there.' And she constrained us.

And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying:

The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, 'These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation.'

And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, 'I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her'. And he came out the same hour.

And when her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas, and drew them into the marketplace unto the rulers.

And brought them to the magistrates, saying, 'These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city.

'And teach customs, which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans.'

And the multitude rose up together against them: and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat them.

And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely:

Who having received such a charge, thrust them, into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks.

And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.

And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed.

And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled.

But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, 'Do thyself no harm: for we are all here.'

Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas.

And brought them out, and said, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?'

And they said, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.'

And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house.

And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway.

And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.

And when it was day, the magistrates sent the serjeants, saying, 'Let those men go.'

And the keeper of the prison told this saying to Paul, 'The magistrates have sent to let you go: now therefore depart, and go in peace.'

But Paul said unto them, 'They have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison; and now do they thrust us out privily? nay verily; but let them come themselves and fetch us out.'

And the serjeants told these words unto the magistrates: and they feared, when they heard that they were Romans.

And they came and besought them, and brought them out, and desired them to depart out of the city.

And they went out of the prison, and entered into the house of Lydia: and when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them, and departed.

Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews:

And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures.

Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead: and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ.

And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few.

But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people.

And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, 'These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also ; Whom Jason hath received : and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus.'

And they troubled the people and the rulers of the city, when they heard these things.

And when they had taken security of Jason, and of the other, they let them go.

And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea (Verria) : who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews.

These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.

Therefore many of them believed ; also of honourable women which were Greeks and of men, not a few.

But when the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was preached of Paul at Berea, they came thither also, and stirred up the people.

And then immediately the brethren sent away Paul to go as it were to the sea : but Silas and Timotheus abode there still.

And they that conducted Paul brought him unto Athens ; and receiving a commandment unto Silas and Timotheus for to come to him with all speed, they departed.

Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry.[1]

The traveller of to-day who takes a car or bus from Neapolis to Philippi must retrace much of the Via Egnatia along which Paul and his companions walked. At Philippi, where at least one inscription has been found referring to dealers in purple dyes, Paul, as had been his custom in Asia Minor, waited for the Sabbath before making an attempt to preach his gospel. For the first time, however, he was adventuring into a city where the Jewish population was negligible. There was no synagogue in Philippi, and so Paul and his companions 'went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and (we) sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither'.

One feels that Paul must have attached a very considerable importance to Philippi to have acted thus. Was it because he had set as his lifework his mission to the Gentiles? Was it the influence of Timotheus, whose father was Greek? Was it because he found among certain of the Philippians an unusual sympathy towards his message? The last may or may not have been a reason for his stay in the city, but from the affection with which he afterwards always spoke of his followers there it would seem to be true. In his epistle to the community of Philippi, he almost goes out of his way to say: 'Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving but ye only. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity.'[2] The Macedonian Jews were responsible for hounding him from Thessalonica and Verria, but he met with no such vindictive opposition in Philippi. Probably, as Lemerle has pointed out, most of the followers of Judaism were likely to have been Gentile converts to its principles rather than circumcised Jews.[3] Paul's troubles in Philippi stemmed only from his having put an end to the lucrative profits which some men had been enjoying through their exploitation of a poor half-witted girl's facility in telling fortunes. These accused him only of teaching (Jewish) 'customs, which are not lawful for us to receive, being Romans'. In Philippi the chronicler of the Acts of the Apostles records no opposition to Paul's preaching of the Christian doctrine of the resurrection.

In Thessalonica and Verria a particular welcome was given to Paul's gospel by the Greek population, 'devout Greeks' as they are called on one occasion. The race of those who received him with such warmth in Philippi is not specified; and nowhere are the indigenous Thracians or Illyrians mentioned. It seems a possibility that, particularly in Philippi, Paul made no distinction between the Greeks and the urban, Hellenised Thracians. Both were eligible for Roman citizen-

[1] Acts of the Apostles xvi and xvii.

[2] Philippians iv, 15 and 16.

[3] P. Lemerle, *Philippes et la Macédoine Orientale* (Paris, 1945), p. 29.

ship. Both would speak Greek. Both, too, practised a synthesis of Thracian and Hellenic cults, which would have prepared them for Christian ideas. The status of women in Illyrian society may, too, have been the reason for the interest shown in Thessalonica and Verria by 'chief' and 'honourable women which were Greeks'. Educated, urban Illyrians, too, would have spoken Greek.

Macedonia continued to figure prominently in the missionary field after Paul's departure. Within a year or so the province was revisited by Timotheus and Erastus. Meanwhile, Gaius and Aristarchus, the only two companions of Paul in Asia Minor who are identified in the Acts of the Apostles, were both Macedonians. The Acts contain no description of Paul's second and third visits, made on his way to and from Greece; but the names of those who accompanied him to Asia Minor on his way to Jerusalem include Sopater of Verria and Aristarchus and Secundus of Thessalonica, the other four being identified as coming from the Roman provinces of Asia.

A final point of special interest in the narrative of the Acts of the Apostles is that following his extensive travels in Roman Asia Minor and Macedonia, Paul reacted so strongly to finding Athens 'wholly given to idolatry'. Until he reached Athens, his natural, traditional, Jewish aversion to graven images does not appear to have been seriously affronted. Here, however, Paul was moved to the first Christian expression of iconoclasm, later to develop into such a violent source of contention between the Greek and Oriental parts of the Byzantine Church.

Chapter V

The Centuries of Persecution and the First Gothic Invasions

WITH regard to Macedonia's contribution to the evolution of Christian doctrine in its first centuries, it is significant, perhaps, that none of the early fathers whose writings were the basis of the formulation of this doctrine wrote from the province. Possibly there was no one with anything particularly constructive to add to that which was coming from other centres. Possibly there was no one with an exceptional gift of the pen. On the other hand it must be remembered that Macedonia and the Via Egnatia were of vital strategic importance to the Roman Empire during the second and third centuries. Roman control over the civil population would have been strict, and would have allowed little latitude to the activities of 'subversive' religions. Even so, Tertullian, writing his *De Prescriptione Haereticorum* at the beginning of the third century, rated Philippi as the leading Christian *ecclesia* of Macedonia and placed it on a level of orthodoxy and authority with those of Rome, Corinth and Ephesus:

> *Age jam, qui voles curiositatem melius exercere in negotio salutis suae, percurre ecclesias apostolicas, apud quas ipsae adhuc cathedrae apostolorum suis locis praesident; apud quas ipsae authenticae litterae eorum recitantur, sonantes voces et repraesentantes faciem uniuscujusque. Proxima est tibi Achais: habes Corinthum; si non longe es a Macedonia, habes Philippos; si potes in Asiam tendere, habes Ephesum; si autem Italiae adjaces, habes Romam.*

If not in doctrine, certainly in other aspects an essentially Macedonian impact upon Christianity is evident. Thessalonica, as we have seen, was able to transfer the attributes of pagan heroes to its Christian patron saint, St Demetrius. The same city, with the enthusiastic support of the province as a whole, was also an early protagonist of the Virgin as the acknowledged Mother of the divine — as distinct from the human — Christ. Although partly inspired by political motives, the fervour induced by the Nestorian controversy points also to deeply rooted religious feelings. This is hardly surprising when the strength of the centuries' long experience of variations on the Great Mother Goddess theme is recalled. We shall follow the translation of this emotion into Christian art when discussing the Thessalonian churches of St Demetrius and 'Acheiropoietos'.

Clearly, the degree to which the pre-Christian religious beliefs of Macedonia affected Christianity during the formative first three centuries of its era must remain a question mark. It may have been considerable; it is unlikely that it was negligible. Certainly, the dominant pagan influence came from the eastern or Thracian region of Macedonia rather than from the Illyrian west. There Mithraism, imported by Roman legionaries from the Orient, had succeeded easily and naturally the indigenous, primitive sun and moon cults and it continued to make progress until checked by Christianity's official triumph in the fourth century. It would, however, be unwise to dismiss too lightly the possible influence of the native Illyro-Macedonian cults upon the local development of Christianity. Although Christianity's victory over Mithraism also appeared complete, the persistence of sun symbols, not merely in the remoter parts of Albania, but prominently displayed in, for instance, the brickwork of the Kastoria churches of Aghios Stephanos (ninth century) and Anagyriou (tenth

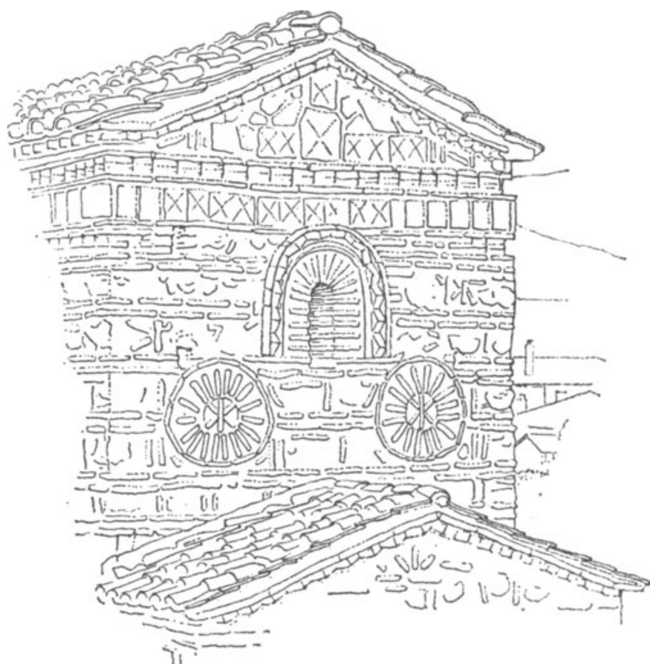


Fig. 38. SUN SYMBOLS IN BRICKWORK ON THE CHURCH OF AGHIOS STEPHANOS, KASTORIA, WESTERN MACEDONIA

century) and, together with the cross, on the mediaeval wooden door of the Verria church of Aghia Paraskevi, indicate that the indigenous beliefs did not succumb so easily or quickly (Figs. 38-40).

However, probably an important result of St Paul's influence on the early evolution of Christianity, the fundamental (though not exclusively) Thracian religious themes, Bendis the chthonic Great Mother Goddess and the Heroic Hunter, were not resurrected in

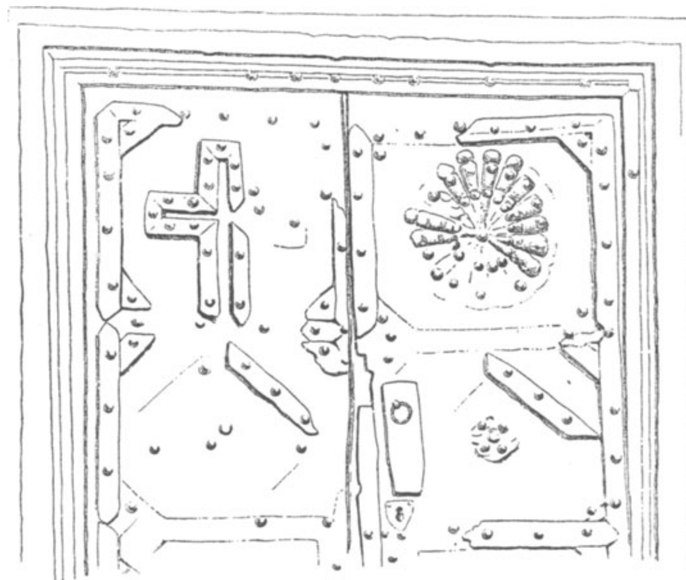


Fig. 40. CROSS AND SUN SYMBOLS ON THE DOORWAY OF THE CHURCH OF AGHIA PARASKEVI, VERRIA, WESTERN MACEDONIA



Fig. 39. SUN SYMBOLS IN BRICKWORK ON THE CHURCH OF THE ANARGYRIOU, KASTORIA, WESTERN MACEDONIA

Christian ideology and iconography for several centuries. Compromise played no part in this dynamic and fanatical apostle-martyr's character, and his example and writings enforced a similar discipline upon Christianity. His reactions to the forces ranged against him in Philippi and other parts of Macedonia, the first impressions probably confirmed during his subsequent journeys, may have played no unimportant part in forming his fateful antipathies. They would have certainly been strengthened by the fact that, although a Roman citizen and the apostle of the Gentiles, he always retained in his heart the strict principles of an orthodox Jew, to whom the idea of a female goddess or a feminine influence in religion was foreign and sacrilegious.

During the second century A.D., Rome's increasing activity on her eastern frontiers brought mounting prosperity for Macedonia. The theatres of Philippi and Stobi, both modelled on lines popular in Asia Minor rather than earlier European forms, date from this century. Stobi's metamorphosis from a garrison town into a well-planned, prosperous, provincial Roman city probably occurred at this time. To an even greater degree the staging-points and cities of the Via Egnatia must have enjoyed a liveliness and wealth

that had never been theirs before — and which before long was to prove an all too great temptation and all too easy prey for invaders. Except for an occasional re-used slab, capital or pillar, and a few buildings excavated, nothing remains of this highway's ancient prosperity — its destruction was so complete and the ensuing Dark Ages so long lasting. In many cases, Verria being an outstanding example, new cities have risen over the graves of the old and rendered archaeological excavation all the more difficult. In others, however, as financial grants slowly become available, the past is being gradually uncovered, revealing the mode of living of those who once earned rich profits from the commerce of the Via Egnatia.

In the second century and for much of the third the Macedonian economy was steadily expanding. Not until the second half of the third century did there appear even the slightest hint of the approaching disaster. There are no records of the progress of Christianity in the province at this time. Perhaps the conditions of prosperity were not particularly propitious. On the other hand, such tendencies as the increasing materialism and the custom of deifying the emperors may well have produced a concealed but strong reaction that would have favoured Christianity's growth.

Whichever was the case, it was not until the fourth century that the Church in Macedonia emerged from its obscurity. In 325 the Council of Nicaea provides us with the first authentic record of the existence of a bishop of Thessalonica. The incumbent, Alexander, who was present at Nicaea, also attended the Council of Tyre in 335 where he was a staunch supporter of Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria, in his struggle against the Court-favoured views of Arius.

Alexander attended, in the same year, the dedication of the Church of the Resurrection in Jerusalem. It was Alexander, too, who, we are told in a mediaeval account written by a monk named Ignatius, had earlier taken the courageous step of baptising the daughter of Galerius during the latter's absence fighting the Sarmatian invaders. This incident is of interest not only in its presentation of a legend concerning the construction of one of Thessalonica's churches (a legend not, in fact, supported by archaeological evidence) but in its story of Macedonian Christianity



Fig. 41. THE EMPEROR GALERIUS MAXIMIANUS

in the years immediately preceding the Peace of the Church. Ignatius tells us:

'It was during the years of the persecution. Impiety, having the Emperor as an ally against Christ, was flourishing and progressing, while piety was almost eliminated. Maximian (Galerius), the Christian-persecuting Emperor, was that notorious and faithful servant of the demons. He lived with his wife and children in the famous city of Thessalonica. At that time he was busy preparing war against the Stavromatai (Sarmatians). He had an only daughter, who became the fertile earth to receive the seed of divine instruction. She was called Theodora. . . .' Walking one day along the seashore beyond the city limits Theodora came to the quarter 'where the persecuted Christians dwelt, because there the tyrants had sentenced them to live . . . . The young princess, with her whole retinue . . . arrived at the altar where the High Priest Alexander was carrying out his bloodless sacrifice. She stopped before the church and after listening outside for some time to the divine hymns, was carried away, and said to her retinue, "I wish to see and hear how the Christians praise their God and what are their chantings".

'She entered the temple with such discretion that the faithful there admired the shyness and the attention of the maid. When the time came for the reading from the Bible (it was the passage from the Final Judgement of the Lord in which He Himself will judge His creations and give each according to his works) and she heard the divine word, she received, like the noble earth, the seed deep within her heart so that it soon began to strike root in her soul. Already the divine fire was kindled within her, the fire which Christ came to bring on earth. She called one of her trusted servants and told him in secrecy, "Without anyone knowing, try to bring the bishop to me this evening".'

That night, leaving her parents under some false pretext, Theodora met Alexander. He interpreted the Bible to her and gave her instruction in 'the divine economy and the mystery of the divine human nature of Christ'. After he had explained the rite of baptism, Theodora exclaimed, '"Here is the water, what prevents me from being baptised?" The bishop, holding her head, christened her in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, in a big jar that was there for the collection of rain water.' Because living with her parents prevented her from carrying out her Christian devotions, Theodora pretended illness and asked her father to build for her a house with a bath in the northern part of the city, near to some quarries, in order that she might forget her bodily sufferings. The house was quickly finished and there Theodora found greater opportunity to follow the instructions of her spiritual father.

Before leaving for his campaign the emperor visited his daughter to inspect her new dwelling and the bath which was still under construction. 'But something made him wonder and he confided his thought to his daughter; namely, how could water be found for the bath since the area was so arid and rocky. The quick-witted princess, however, replied, "He who has made all this will undertake to bring water even from very far away".'

'When the emperor left for the campaign, Theodora was able to act with greater ease and to concentrate all her energies on the building of the so-called bath, which, as soon as it was ready, she called the Temple of Christ and the Sacred Refuge of the Holy Ghost. She requested the High Priest Alexander to inaugurate the newly built church by placing the cross with his own hands on the foundation of the altar. She commissioned a mosaicist to design an icon of the Holy Mother on the eastern apse.' But the day the mosaicist came to put the finishing touches to his work, 'in the place of the Holy Mother he saw another icon, completely different from the one he had created, Christ with a man's features sitting on a shining cloud'.

Ignatius then describes the mosaic of the Vision of Ezekiel in the eastern apse of the church of Hosios David and the inscription at its foot with such accuracy that it has been of considerable assistance to present century restoration work. 'When the mosaicist saw this spectacle', Ignatius continues, 'he became speechless and sent someone to tell Theodora. She hurried at once to the scene of the miracle and, after becoming ecstatic herself at the sight, ordered the mosaicist not to touch the divine imprint, which she then worshipped.'

'The devil, nevertheless, who is the enemy of every Christian, cast his evil eye on the spiritual bliss of Theodora. One of her slaves betrayed her to her mother. At first the Empress refused to believe the allegation. She called Theodora and tried with sweet words, prayers and advice to convince her how hard and terrible is the life of a Christian and then asked if all was true that she had heard. Wishing to gain time the princess denied everything . . . she took calves' leather, bricks and mortar and covered the icon of Christ in a way that it should remain undamaged, thus preventing its destruction and eliminating all cause of suspicion against her.'

'Some time later the Empress wished to offer magnificent sacrifices to Artemis for the health and salvation of the Emperor. She invited all the nobles of the city and the Council and all the people to participate in these celebrations. Theodora, however, refused, saying, "My mother, I should be out of my senses if I agreed to sacrifice to these dead dummies. These are not gods, they are sorcerers and deceivers and they send those who worship them to eternal damnation. As David says of them, Let the gods perish who did not create heaven and earth".' Theodora maintained her refusal, despite pleadings, threats and reminders by her mother of her father's ferocity. Finally, the empress reported her daughter's misconduct to the emperor, who ordered the maid to be strictly confined until his return and her house in the quarries and the 'bath' to be burned down. Although his instructions were carried out, the holy icon was nevertheless, 'as was afterwards proved', preserved intact. Ignatius relates of Theodora that she 'was delivered to the guards and thus she terminated her life by giving her holy spirit to the Lord and her untouched body into the hands of the faithful'.[1]

The martyrdom of St Demetrius, Thessalonica's patron saint, also belongs to the early years of the fourth century, probably around 303. Although opinions differ as to whether St Demetrius belongs to Thessalonica or the Danubian city of Sirmium, his legendary aspects outweigh the historical in importance, and, in this sense, the claims of Sirmium to St Demetrius vanished, with Sirmium itself, in the Dark Ages. The Thessalonian association, on the other

[1] A full Greek version of this extract from Ignatius is given in S. Pelekanides, ΠΑΛΑΙΟΧΡΙΣΤΙΑΝΙΚΑ ΜΝΗΜΕΙΑ ΘΕΣΣΑΛΟΝΙΚΗΣ (Thessalonica, 1949).

hand, has developed through the centuries as an integral part of the city's story.

St Demetrius, it is related, belonged to an old Thessalonian family. He entered the army, where his bravery and resourcefulness brought him rapid promotion and attracted the attention of Galerius, at that time Caesar of Illyricum and Thrace. Galerius appointed him Prefect but Demetrius became converted to Christianity and, with all the zeal that had won him distinction in the army, rapidly became one of its leading advocates. About 303, Galerius, returning to Thessalonica from one of his campaigns, inaugurated a violent persecution of the Christians. Demetrius was arrested on his orders while preaching the Gospel and brought to him. The Caesar tried to persuade him to renounce his religion. Demetrius refused, and Galerius, in a hurry to attend some games taking place in the stadium, ordered his confinement in the basement of some nearby baths.

In the stadium Galerius announced a prize of a large sum of money for anyone able to defeat the champion gladiator, Lyaios. The other gladiators held back, but a young Christian friend of Demetrius named Nestor rushed to him in his prison and asked for his blessing in order that he might challenge Lyaios and defeat him. Demetrius gave it, but warned his friend that martyrdom would follow his victory.

Galerius, out of pity for Nestor's youth, tried to dissuade him from the challenge, and even offered to give him the amount of the prize money if he withdrew. Nestor refused and, to the astonishment of all, fought and killed Lyaios. Furious at the death of his favourite, Galerius ordered Nestor before him again. When he learned that he, too, was a Christian and attributed his victory to the blessing of Demetrius, he sentenced the young gladiator to immediate execution. Further reflection, supported by the hints of his entourage, however, soon convinced Galerius that the real instigator of Lyaios' death was his ex-protégé, Demetrius, and he ordered soldiers forthwith to the baths to spear him to death with their lances. That night the martyr's mutilated body was recovered by some of his Christian followers and buried in a basement of the baths.

Soon after attaining their liberty to worship, the Thessalonian Christians built a small church above Demetrius's grave. This quickly developed into a shrine which possessed miraculous powers of healing, drawing sick people from many parts of the Empire. Among them was Leontius, Prefect of Illyricum in 412–13. Cured, it is said, of paralysis, in his gratitude Leontius demolished the small early church and the baths and built in their place a great, new basilica, dedicated to the saint.

As Christianity progressed, St Demetrius quickly developed into Thessalonica's patron saint and defender. Rarely has a city placed such implicit and lasting faith in the ability of its patron saint to preserve it from disaster. More than once during the barbarian invasions, it was this faith alone that maintained the citizens' morale, and, conversely, served in no small degree to undermine that of their enemies. Unfortunately, it must be admitted that there have, too, been rare occasions when even Thessalonian faith in St Demetrius could not inspire the required miracle. Twice the church has suffered severe damage from fire, once in the seventh century and again as recently as 1917. Yet, despite occasional misfortune, St Demetrius's reputation throughout Christendom as an effective defender of his city, as a protector of children and as a healer of the sick redounded in no small degree to the renown of Thessalonica in the Byzantine age, and drew pilgrims and sick persons seeking to be healed even from Constantinople.

The first decade or so of the fourth century saw the building of the earliest monuments in Thessalonica that still exist to-day. The ruins of the first, Galerius's Triumphal Arch (Pl. 8), erected to celebrate his victory over the Persians in 303, are now by-passed by the modern Odos Egnatia, but originally it marked the intersection of one of the city's main streets and an avenue leading from the Rotunda of Galerius to his palace. Clearly exhibiting Greco-Syrian influences, the marble reliefs which decorate the central piers show incidents from the Persian war, the martial deeds of Galerius, and Roman emperors offering sacrifices to the gods.

The Rotunda, erected about 310, has survived the centuries in a remarkable manner. Galerius probably intended it as his mausoleum, and grandiosely may have styled it after the Roman Pantheon and purposely made it to dwarf Diocletian's mausoleum at Split. But

the great persecutor of the Christians died on a distant expedition and, in the true vein of Greek dramatic irony, in the late fourth century his Rotunda became instead a church, dedicated either then or later, to St George, the Christian 'Great Martyr'.

The growing imperial interest in Thessalonica, the additional ensuing prosperity and prestige, and even Galerius's construction of a number of splendid monuments were, however, due to more ominous factors than the commercial importance of the Via Egnatia. The first two centuries of the Christian era had seen the Roman Empire extend to its farthest limits. Although by the end of the second century its frontiers had already begun to recede, they still included Britain, all of Europe west of the Rhine and south of the Danube, as well as the Dacian conquest of Trajan. In Asia, Asia Minor, Armenia, Northern Mesopotamia, Syria and Palestine, and in Africa, Egypt and the north African coast were still Roman provinces. But to find sufficient manpower to defend the lengthy frontiers, the Emperors had for a long time enlisted native troops from the Imperial provinces. When these proved inadequate, barbarian or semi-barbarian tribes had been invited to settle in depopulated regions within the Imperial frontiers as foederati, on condition that they provided the defence for their particular sector.

This policy could be followed with safety only to a certain point. By the third century, if not before, that point had been passed, and throughout this century the populations of the Roman Empire, and particularly the ranks of its defenders, were being weakened by the continual introduction of undisciplined, barbarian elements. Thessalonica's new role was no longer primarily commercial; it was the strategic rear headquarters — to Sirmium on the Danube — of the military command of Illyricum which had now to be reorganised to meet the barbarian threat to the great trans-Balkan routes.

This threat was, in the main, the southern section of a two-pronged Teutonic thrust. The Western Teutons — Angles, Saxons, Jutes, Frisians, Franks, Alemans, Bavarians, Swabians, Thuringians — had grouped themselves between the rivers Elbe, Danube, Rhine and the North Sea. The Eastern tribes — Visigoths, Ostrogoths, Vandals, Burgundians, Lombards — inhabited an area bounded by the River Don in the east, the Danube in the south, and to the west and north by the regions occupied by the Western Teutons and Scandinavian tribes. From these positions the Western Teutons erupted westwards, their eastern brothers to the south.

The earliest Gothic raids across the Danube into Moesia, Thrace and Macedonia occurred shortly before A.D. 250, while the Ostrogoths and the Visigoths were still one tribe. The damage achieved on these first incursions was small, but the ease with which they had been made into a countryside holding out promises of loot beyond their most avaricious dreams, convinced the Goths that the situation was worthy of exploitation by a full-scale invasion. Small bands might attack the rural districts and rob them at will, but the real prizes were the well-fortified and properly garrisoned towns and cities. Accordingly, in 250, organised into a strong and numerous army, the Goths again appeared in Moesia. The Roman force sent to repel them was heavily defeated at Thracian Verria (Stara Zagora). After a fierce siege Philippopolis was treacherously surrendered and many of the foederati charged with its defence joined forces with the invaders. The other large, well-fortified cities held out, but the major part of Moesia, Thrace and Macedonia was now open to the barbarians, who looted, sacked, slaughtered and took captive without mercy or hindrance. Towards the end of 251, the Emperor Decius gathered a new Roman army to meet them in the Dobruja. It, too, was defeated and Decius himself numbered among the slain.

In 252, contemptuously disregarding the peace by which Decius's successor had bought their withdrawal, the Goths again crossed the Danube and made south for Thessalonica, leaving everywhere a trail of devastation. Although fiercely besieged, the city's defences stood firm and, after heavy losses on both sides, the Goths retired to their trans-Danubian homeland. The lull that the Balkans appear to have experienced for a few years after this was, however, no more than a time of preparation for a further Gothic attempt to sack Thessalonica. A huge Gothic army, backed by a fleet of comparable size, appeared on the Moesian coast early in 269. There it divided, the army advancing on Thessalonica by land, once more devastating

Thracia *en route*, and the navy passing through the Bosphorus into the Aegean. Before investing Thessalonica, this fleet coasted along the Asia Minor shore, Rhodes and Crete, leaving, as had another Gothic fleet ten years earlier, a train of destruction in its wake.

Again Thessalonica, with the nearby city of Cassandreia, heroically and successfully resisted the invaders until a relieving army under the Emperor Claudius II approaching from the north caused the Goths to lift the siege. The two armies met near Naissus (Niš) in the latter half of 269. The Goths suffered a complete defeat, leaving, it is said, 50,000 dead behind them. It was an important victory that restored the lands south of the Danube to Roman control for another century. But the frontier was no longer secure. Raiding bands continually crossed the Danube, destroyed and looted, and returned before the Roman forces could reach them. In addition to the necessity of maintaining expensive armies at the alert, two emperors, Galerius in 305 and Constantine in 331–2, were obliged to launch large-scale military operations in defence of their Balkan territories against invaders that included Sarmatians as well as Goths.

Although the barbarian invasions brought a swift and bloody ending to the commercial economy based on the Via Egnatia, its decline was inevitable after Constantine's decision to transfer the capital to the shores of the Bosphorus. With the foundation of Constantinople, as Collart has written, 'Rome ceased to be a pole for the basin of the Aegean. The Via Egnatia lost its meaning.'[1]

The strategic basis of such cities as Pella, Aegae (Edessa), Heraclea Lyncestis (near Bitola) and Lychnidus (Ohrid) immediately began to fade. Already the countryside had ceased to be safe, unbelievable as this seemed after four centuries of the pax romana. Now, as trade dwindled, dilapidation, depopulation and poverty followed. Thessalonica, by virtue of its situation, might be able to maintain a military and administrative *raison d'être*. With the triumph of Christianity, Philippi, the site of a Constantinian basilica and closely associated with St Paul, might enter a new phase as a centre of pilgrimage; but by the time the barbarian attacks were renewed in the last quarter of the fourth century, many once-wealthy towns and villages of the Via Egnatia between Thessalonica and the Adriatic must already have assumed a ghost-like appearance. By then it had already come about that 'the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows be darkened'. Such was the twilight background of the Macedonian countryside in the century immediately following the Peace of the Church.

[1] P. Collart, *Philippes, ville de Macédoine depuis ses origines jusqu'à la fin de l'époque romaine* (Paris, 1937), p. 522.

Chapter VI

Political and Ecclesiastical Rivalries

THE project of Constantine the Great, joint emperor from 306 and reigning alone from 323 until 337, to establish a new capital based on the eastern provinces of the Empire, cannot but have excited the ambitions of the Thessalonians. Under Galerius and, between 312 and 322, under Constantine himself, the Macedonian capital had several times served as the imperial residence and the headquarters for military operations against the northern invaders. Under the latter emperor's direction, Gothic prisoners of war had constructed a proper harbour, which Thessalonica had hitherto lacked, and the city had been the assembly point of an army and a navy gathered to wage war against his rival emperor Licinius. It would certainly have been strange if Constantine had not seriously weighed the advantages of a city so strategically placed, so well situated on important trade routes and, moreover, with a Church possessing the moral prestige of a Pauline foundation. To the Thessalonians, understandably enough, their city must have been the obvious and only choice. Neither Alexandria nor Antioch was sufficiently central, Sirmium was too northerly and exposed, Athens too indelibly reactionary and pagan. There is even a tradition that Constantine had actually selected Thessalonica to be his capital, only to be later dissuaded by an epidemic, which forced him to evacuate the city.

Whatever the reasons, in 330 it was not Thessalonica, but Byzantium, on the European shore of the Bosphorus, that gained the title of the 'city of Constantine'. The decision must have come as a bitter blow to Thessalonian pride, for Byzantium, though older, was a city of considerably less contemporary importance, size and prosperity. The powerful influence of Christian traditionalism, nurtured in the years of adversity and repression, and now spurred by the invigorating effect of the Edict of Milan, must also have weighed strongly in determining Thessalonica's attitude. As the Church of Rome was able to claim special reverence on the grounds that there SS. Peter and Paul had attained the culmination of their missionary work and martyrdom, so the Christians of the Macedonian capital treasured the fact that their city had been one of the first to have received Paul and Silas on their mission to the European provinces of the Empire. In the vision that had appeared to Paul in Asia Minor there had 'stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying "Come over into Macedonia and help us"'. Byzantium, with its strongly pagan background, had no such honoured place, in fact no place at all in the early records of Christianity. The priorities of the Church of Rome, founded by St Peter, that of Alexandria, founded by St Mark and that of Antioch, founded by St Peter, were recognised. They were Churches and, for that matter, cities whose leadership Thessalonica could in no way pretend to dispute. But upstart Byzantium, henceforth Constantinople and officially recognised as New Rome, possessed no such pedigree. The Thessalonians, in the same way as the Alexandrians, would not have been human, and certainly not Greek, if they had accepted Constantine's fateful decision without bitterness. Rome could be consoled with the record of a glorious past and was still, in 330, the capital of half the Roman

world; but Thessalonica, the 'might have been', watched the embellishment of Constantinople with magnificent churches, palaces and monuments, and the growth of its influence and wealth, with an envy and resentment that was to colour its religious, political and artistic outlook for several centuries. When, in 381, the inevitable occurred and the Council of Constantinople declared the capital to be the seat of a new Bishopric, having equality with Rome, and the Bishop of Constantinople next in rank to the Bishop of Rome, 'because Constantinople is New Rome', it can only have added to the rancour already felt by Thessalonica towards its successful rival.

We have few facts upon which to judge the progress of Macedonian Christianity between the Edicts of Toleration and the accession of Theodosius in 379. The little we know gives an impression of vigour, even turbulence, in the early part of this period; but after the middle of the century a revival of paganism, associated with economic decline and failing security, appears to have forced Christianity back once more to the defensive. Bishop Alexander of Thessalonica died after taking part in the Council of Tyre in 335. Aetius, who held the see from 342 until probably 355, had had to contend with two rivals, Eutychianus and Museus, whose practice of increasing their following by means of indiscriminate ordinations could have been of no help to the sound organisation of the Church. About this time Thessalonica must, indeed, have presented a lively ecclesiastical spectacle, for at the Council of Sardica, in 343, Aetius is quoted as boasting 'You all know how great and beautiful is the metropolis of Thessalonica. Priests and deacons from other provinces, in fact, often come there. And a short stay in no way suffices them; on the contrary, they remain there for ever, and if they are obliged to return to their own churches they do so after a long time (and as if unwillingly).'[1] Archbishop Herenius, who succeeded in 355, signified a short-lived change in policy by abandoning the cause of Athanasius of Alexandria at the Council of Milan held that year. This first recorded instance of an ecclesiastical alignment of Thessalonica with Constantinople was soon reversed by Acholius, his successor, who held the see *circa* 374 to 383-4.

[1] J. D. Mansi, *Sacrorium Conciliorum Collectio* (Florence, 1769-98), vol. iii, p. 17.

The foundation of Constantinople had moved the centre of gravity of the Roman Empire away from Roman soil to a point which Rome had succeeded in occupying and ruling, but had never absorbed. Byzantium had been and had remained a Greek city, dependent in the main on trade links that stretched eastwards beyond the farthermost limits of Alexander's conquests, and beyond the Black Sea into territories that to-day comprise central and southern Russia. Its hinterland was the virile and wealthy region of Asia Minor as much as if not more than the less secure east Balkan lands, a fact that was to assume an increasing importance in the coming centuries.

The political power of the 'Old Rome' did not end automatically with Constantine's foundation of Constantinople, but as its western provinces crumpled before the barbarian attacks, its doom was inexorable. Until 476 Italy remained the seat of a western emperor, and however unsuitable for office the incumbent might be, the traditions of a glorious past still to some degree persisted. But, after the western emperors had transferred first to Milan and then to the lagoon-protected haven of Ravenna, Rome's fall was swift. Alaric and his Goths sacked it in 410, Gaiseric and his Vandals in 455. In 546 the Gothic king, Totila, completed its ignominy when, leaving its buildings standing, he contemptuously ejected the whole population, letting the city lie desolate and uninhabited for forty days.

This demoralisation of Rome and the Italian countryside in the fifth century provided an opportunity for which only its Church was ready. In 452, when Attila and his army of Huns crossed into Italy, Pope Leo the Great led a Roman embassy to the barbarian leader to ask him to spare the city. Whether, in fact, to Leo is due the major share of the credit for turning back Attila, or whether the latter had other, more urgent reasons, is a minor point compared with the moral effect throughout the Christian West of Leo's initiative and leadership. Three years later, when the Vandals entered and plundered Rome, it was again Leo who persuaded them to spare the city and population from destruction, and who was able to save, in considerable measure, the churches and their furnishings.

The courageous acceptance of moral leadership by the Church of Rome had a particularly important effect in Macedonia. Eastern Illyricum, of which Mace-

donia was part, was from the first a region of contention between the old and new Romes. On the accession of Theodosius the Great in 379, its political jurisdiction was ceded to Constantinople by Gratian, the western Emperor. Ecclesiastical authority remained with the Pope, but the many difficulties of maintaining control in these circumstances were enhanced by the expansionist ambitions of the Patriarchs of Constantinople. Pope Damasus (366–84) attempted to meet the situation by appointing Acholius of Thessalonica as his Vicar Apostolic, delegating to him authority to preside over local Church Councils, confirm elections of ordinary bishops, authorise ordinations and deliver judgement on all but the most important matters.

Acholius (or Ascholius) was an outstanding personality and the friend of such contemporary figures as St Basil, Bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia and St Ambrose, Bishop of Milan. His problems were not only political. The general social and economic malaise arising from the Gothic invasions during the reign of Valens had given a new stimulus to paganism, still by no means vanquished. The pagan sects had regained their old rights of free worship, including access to their sanctuaries. A lucky chance enabled Acholius to reverse this trend. Towards the end of 379 Theodosius was taken severely ill at Thessalonica. While believing himself about to die, he was converted to Christianity by Acholius and baptised, following which act he recovered rapidly. Not unnaturally ready to accept the advice of Acholius in religious matters, on 28th February 380, Theodosius issued the celebrated Edict of Thessalonica:

> It is our pleasure that all the nations which are governed by our clemency and moderation should steadfastly adhere to the religion which was taught by St Peter to the Romans ; which faithful tradition has preserved ; and which is now professed by the pontiff Damasus, and by Peter, bishop of Alexandria, a man of apostolic holiness. According to the discipline of the apostles and the doctrine of the gospel, let us believe the sole deity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost ; under an equal majesty and a pious Trinity. We authorise the followers of this doctrine to assume the title of Catholic Christians ; and, as we judge that all others are extravagant madmen, we brand them with the infamous name of Heretics ; and declare that their conventicles shall no longer usurp the respectable appellation of churches. Besides the condemnation of Divine justice, they must expect to suffer the severe penalties which our authorities, guided by heavenly wisdom, shall think proper to inflict upon them.

Such an affirmation of the Nicaean attitude was more than a great personal triumph for Acholius; it was a powerful blow aimed by Thessalonica at Constantinople, for some forty years, that is to say since the death of Constantine, the chief centre of the Arian heresy. The Arians, motivated by principles of strict monotheism, repudiated the doctrine of the Son being co-eternal with the Father, denying as a consequence, the fundamental Nicaean conception of the Trinity. In terms of fourth-century ecclesiastical politics, therefore, Theodosius's Edict was a resounding declaration of Thessalonica's alignment with Rome and Alexandria in their opposition to the capital. With its adversaries no less than among its friends the Edict increased the prestige of the city and its bishops abroad. We can hardly doubt, too, that the self-esteem of its citizens at home was similarly raised. On the other hand, more than ever before, it must have strengthened the determination of the Patriarchs of Constantinople to exert their authority over this stubborn but key city.

Another, less savoury incident links the name of Theodosius with Thessalonica, and one that was also an important factor in deciding the city's attitude between Rome and Constantinople. In 391 Theodosius passed through Thessalonica on his way to suppress a rebellion in his western territories. Heavy requisitions were levied ruthlessly upon the citizens who were doubly infuriated at having to surrender their wealth to an army largely composed of detested Gothic mercenaries. Thus it was particularly unfortunate that when the emperor and his army departed, he should leave behind in the city a garrison of Gothic troops under Botheric, a Gothic general honoured with the title of military commander of Illyricum. It was a situation in which the faintest spark was capable of setting off a full-scale conflagration.

The inevitable tragedy was as ridiculous in its cause as shocking in its consequences. Botheric arrested and imprisoned one of his chariot drivers, an act for which he appears to have had justification enough. The incident would have had no importance had not the

curiosity of the spectators attending the public games held soon after been aroused by the absence of this man, one of their favourite competitors. Discovering his situation, they demanded his release and, when this was refused, began to riot. The spark had been struck. The whole city rose and Botheric and his detachment of Gothic troops were massacred.

In Italy Theodosius received the news with deep anger. St Ambrose, then presiding over an episcopal council in Milan, urged him, with apparent success, to adopt a policy of clemency. But, fearful that the incident might result in a general rising of his Gothic troops, Theodosius allowed crueller counsels to prevail. In 392 a new Gothic garrison was ordered to the city. It seemed that Thessalonica's crime had been either forgotten or forgiven and the citizens were soon invited to games in the hippodrome. Then, even more suddenly than the previous occurrence, a new massacre took place. This time, with the consent of the emperor, the Goths took their revenge. Seven thousand persons, young and old, men and women, Thessalonians and foreigners, were indiscriminately slaughtered.

St Ambrose's reaction was characteristically courageous. He withdrew from his church, in order not to associate his spiritual authority with the giving of the Holy Sacrament to the Emperor. Then, from his retreat he sent to Theodosius a letter of dignified reproof. As a result Theodosius humbled himself in abject and public penance in acknowledgement of his responsibility for the crime. There can be little doubt that this spontaneous act of greatness by St Ambrose was a powerful factor in the long tradition of loyalty which Thessalonica and the province of Macedonia were to demonstrate to the Church of Rome for several centuries to come.

The strength of this tradition was shown in the following century when a decree of Theodosius II dated 421, later incorporated into his Code of 439, which attached all the bishops of eastern Illyricum to the Patriarchate of Constantinople, was to a large extent ignored. Even during this nadir of Roman fortunes many of the Macedonian bishops continued to regard the Pope as their spiritual superior with a no less stubborn loyalty than their fourth-century predecessors had shown to Pope Damasus. Under the Emperor Anastasius (491–518) the Pope succeeded in officially reasserting his authority throughout Illyricum; but in 535, when Justinian reorganised eastern Illyricum into two ecclesiastical dioceses, the southern under Thessalonica and the northern under his new foundation of Justiniana Prima, the ascendancy reverted to Constantinople. Nevertheless, it appears from the letters of Pope Gregory the Great (590–604) that by the end of the century the Church of Illyricum was again within the Roman fold. In so far as organised Christianity persisted, which was little farther than the environs of Thessalonica, Papal authority seems to have continued in theory, if less and less in fact, into the eighth century and was not completely displaced until the end of the period of iconoclasm midway through the ninth. Even so, a remarkable echo of this Early Byzantine, pro-Roman period appears in a report by Grujić that among peasants in the neighbourhood of the river Bregalnica (north of Stobi) the word in use for 'communion' has remained *komka*, which is derived from the Latin *communio*, not from the Greek κοινωνία. He suggests that this survival is probably due to the local copying of ancient codices.[1]

[1] R. M. Grujić, 'Archaeological and Historical Notes on Macedonia', *Starinar*, 1952–53, (Belgrade), p. 215 (Serbian).

Chapter VII

Renewed Gothic Invasions and the Appearance of the Slavs

THE conversion to Christianity of many of the Goths living north of the Danube midway through the fourth century must have seemed a hopeful omen for a perpetuation of the peace established by Claudius's victory at Naissus in 269 and consolidated by the expeditions of Galerius and Constantine. From the ecclesiastical viewpoint of Macedonia it was certainly unfortunate that the Goths had adhered to the Arian Christianity of Constantinople, and not to the orthodox form of Rome, Alexandria and Thessalonica; but whatever theological qualms may have arisen, no one could doubt that the conversion of the Goths would materially improve the security of the province.

These hopes were unfounded. An internal revolt which broke out in 365 against the Emperor Valens was supported by the Goths. After temporarily losing control of the Balkans, Valens defeated the rebels. Then, crossing the Danube, he took so stern a revenge among their Gothic allies that a decade later, when the Huns entered eastern Europe, they were still in no condition to resist the savage new foe in their rear. The Christian element, mainly Visigoths, appealed to Valens for refuge within the Empire. Their settlement in depopulated Moesia was agreed, but, unhappily, the arrangements were mishandled and the frightened refugees, suspecting treachery, decided to strike first. With Ostrogothic help they devastated the Moesian and Thracian countryside and, although unsuccessful in reducing the larger fortified cities, inflicted a disastrous defeat on the imperial army, slaying Valens himself in the battle of Adrianople in 378. Realising their inability to capture Constantinople, the Goths then turned west, laying siege to Thessalonica and ranging at will through Macedonia, Thessaly, Epirus and Achaia, looting, burning and killing wherever they passed. The desperate situation was saved by the experienced generalship of Theodosius, called from his retirement in Spain and made emperor in 379. Theodosius reformed the imperial army, relieved Thessalonica, and then, or soon after, rebuilt its walls. Another Ostrogothic invasion was routed and the Visigoths were confined to their agreed territories in Moesia.

The firm hand of Theodosius kept the Balkan provinces free from risings and invasions until his death in 395. When this occurred, however, the Visigoths of Moesia elected Alaric, a natural military leader, as their king. Alaric quickly spread destruction and terror throughout the Macedonian countryside and deep into Greece. The Emperor Arcadius, who had succeeded to the eastern half of the Empire, was a weak youth. The Byzantine court was divided by intrigues. The resultant anarchy was such that the local populations probably found little to choose between a visitation from the imperial armies, largely composed of Gothic foederati, and one from the dreaded bands of Alaric. The devastation inflicted in Thrace, Epirus, Macedonia, central Greece, and the northern parts of Illyricum appears to have been tremendous. The Via Egnatia, at the opening of the century at the zenith of its prosperity, was, by the end, a desolate ruin. Then, with the close of the century, Alaric and his Visigoths turned their attention to Italy. With their own recent experiences still clearly in mind, the Balkan peoples

must have learnt the news of the capture and sack of Rome in 410 with an especial thrill of horror; but one that was none the less mixed with relief that, at least, their own greatest cities had been spared this fate.

The thirty to forty years of peace for the Empire's Balkan provinces that followed the departure of Alaric was a much-needed period of recuperation. Under the Emperor Theodosius II (408–50), fortifications were rebuilt and the economy of the peninsula given a chance to recover. As part of the marriage settlement of the western Emperor Valentinian III to the daughter of Theodosius, Dalmatia and west Illyricum were joined to the Eastern Empire, an act which brought the whole of the northern defences of the peninsula under a unified command. The urgent need for strong defensive measures was proved by the activities of the Huns, who, now established in the Central European plain, were rapidly developing into a major threat to neighbouring parts of the Empire. A destructive raid in 434 was checked only by the signing of a humiliating and short-lived treaty, which was followed almost immediately by a terrible invasion led by Attila himself which spread fire, slaughter and devastation right to the Aegean coast. Again an ignominious treaty secured a breathing space, promising a crippling tribute in return for freedom from molestation. Again, it was disregarded when Attila chose, for, in 447, his destructive hordes rampaged as far south as Thermopylae.

The Hun threat to the Balkans ceased as suddenly as it had come. Attila's ambitions took his armies to western Europe, where, until his death in 453, they were perhaps an even greater menace to the feeble embers of Latin civilisation than they had been to the Eastern Empire. In the Balkans, however, their disruptive role, together with their Pannonian base, was rapidly filled by the Ostrogoths, who, around 457, invaded Illyricum and captured Dyrrhachium (Durazzo). Ten years later they appeared once more in another heavy raid, this time reinforced by Hun bands from Attila's disintegrating hordes.

The last three decades of the fifth century saw the simultaneous ending of one troubled chapter in Balkan history and the opening of another. By 500 the Teutonic, in particular the Gothic, danger had become a nightmare of the past, but, among the barbarian raiders taking their place on the northern frontiers, were the advance parties of two new groups, the Bulgars and the Slavs who were together destined to bring about a permanent change in the ethnic character of the peninsula.

The year 474 had brought the last large-scale Vandal raid, one that had resulted in the sack of Nicopolis in southern Epirus. In the same year there opened a new and the final series of Gothic deprecations, including the destruction consequent upon civil warfare among the Ostrogothic foederati. In the course of this Theodoric the Amal sacked Stobi and created a panic in Thessalonica; but, instead of investing the city, he turned west along the Via Egnatia and occupied Heraclea Lyncestis (near Bitola); destroying part of the city. Theodoric then led his army on to Lychnidus (Ochrida, Ohrid), failed to capture it, but marched on to seize Scampae (Elbasan) and Dyrrhachium (Durazzo). For fourteen years, during a period of weak and divided central government in Constantinople, Macedonia was the helpless scene of alternating periods of uneasy peace and Gothic wars. At last, however, in 488, Theodoric, too, was persuaded to lead his followers out of the Balkans to seize for himself a new kingdom in Italy, and the Gothic menace finally ended. 474, too, was the year in which the Bulgars, hitherto a useful source of recruitment for the imperial armies, were first recorded as developing into a serious menace to the lands south of the Danube. Two years before the century ended the confused ethnic situation in the Balkans was further confounded by the transportation of numerous Isaurian rebels from south-east Asia Minor to depopulated Thrace.

Pioneer groups of Slavs had first begun to infiltrate through the Carpathian, Tatra and Moravian passes into the present-day territory of Hungary in the early years of the Christian era. Here, steadily increasing in numbers, they settled under the rule of the Sarmatian tribe of Iazyges. Unlike the great barbarian invasions, it was a peaceful migration, and one that occurred so quietly as apparently to pass unnoticed by the statesmen and provincial administrators of the Roman Empire.

Very little definite information exists regarding either the origins or the early history of the Slavs, whose first vague and fitful appearances in recorded history occur during the latter half of the first millennium B.C. Around 500 B.C., and probably during the

immediately preceding centuries, their homeland stretched from somewhere north or east of the Carpathians to the Pripet Marshes. Whether it was roughly centred on this broad band of territory, or extended more to the north-west towards the Baltic, or eastwards towards the middle Don, is subject to dispute. Certainly it was continually changing and lacked the fixed boundaries of a settled state. As their neighbours the Slavs had Teutonic tribes to the north-west, Celts to the west, Illyrians to the south-west, Thracians to the south, and Iranians to the south-east. Thus, not only were they beyond the reach of the legions of imperial Rome, but, except for a small number of prisoners and slaves of the Scythians in the region of the Black Sea, their habitat and complete existence lay outside the horizons of the ancient Greek world.

About 500 B.C., the Scythians, an Iranian tribe whose territory covered the Ukrainian steppelands, swept suddenly westwards and destroyed the so-called Lusatian culture, which extended approximately over the area of modern Poland. Archaeology has only recently begun to reveal anything of this civilisation. Who the 'Lusatians' were is still an enigma and, although the Slavs rank as prominent candidates, claims can also be made out for the Thracians and the Illyrians, or even for a people whose identity is as yet unknown. The fateful consequences of the Scythian invasion are, however, starkly clear.

> It must [writes Dvornik] have considerably weakened the native population, thus permitting envious neighbours to raid and pillage. This weakening enabled the Germans to press towards the Oder, and the Celts, who until then were settled in modern France and western and southern Germany, to move towards the east and occupy Bohemia, Moravia, parts of Silesia and the lands of the upper Vistula. This was the beginning of the great migration and expansion of the Celts ; it caused a violent upheaval in Italy, where, in 390 B.C., they sacked Rome and threatened to conquer the whole country. It also shook Asia Minor where some of the Celtic tribes found a definite home and became the Galatians to whom St Paul addressed one of his epistles.[1]

The Scythians withdrew, but the Lusatian civilisation was shattered; and those responsible for it, whether Slavs or others, perished at the barbarous hands of the Scythians or of other tribes raiding in their wake. The gap thus left was filled by Slavs from the east. Known as the Venidi, or Wends, these settled on the land and gradually built up a distinctive culture of their own which reached its zenith during the first century A.D.

To some extent, perhaps considerable, the Scythians exerted an overlordship over the early Slavs. About 200 B.C., however, the Scythians were defeated and replaced in Ukrainian Russia by a kindred tribe, the Sarmatians. The new invaders, nomadic like the Scythians and employing a well-armed cavalry, quickly extended their empire from the Don to the eastern slopes of the Carpathians, and even beyond this barrier into modern Hungary. The majority of the Slav tribes became their subjects. It seems likely that the Sarmatian suzerainty was closer and more effective than the Scythian had been, for, under their new masters, the Slavs developed an aptitude for disciplined warfare and a greatly increased political consciousness. It is at this time that the tribe or group known as the Antes appears for the first time in history. As usual, historical mention of them is exasperatingly vague, but it is probable that they consisted of Slavs under Sarmatian leadership. In any case they grew to form an important Slav unit of the Sarmatian Empire.

By the beginning of the Christian era the territory occupied by Slav tribes already stretched from the Baltic Sea to the Tatra and Carpathian mountains, and from the River Elbe to the Black Sea. Corresponding to the Sarmatian domination in the south and east, the north-west Slavs of the Baltic region were obliged to acknowledge the overlordship of the Goths. About this time a general migratory movement in the direction of the Black Sea seems to have been taking place over the whole of this area. Reasons are not difficult to find; they include the attractions of a drier and warmer climate, the trade and culture of Greek Black Sea cities, the powerful, glittering civilisations of Persia and the Roman East. The Slavs, involved in pastoral and agricultural pursuits, moved slowly, almost imperceptibly, in an unorganised and haphazard manner. Quite suddenly, towards the end of the second century A.D., the Goths also decided to migrate. Their progress

[1] F. Dvornik, *The Slavs, Their Early History and Civilisation* (Boston, 1956), p. 12.

was a very different matter. Moving quickly and in a comparatively disciplined mass, they swept down the course of the Dnieper — the Slavs who found themselves in their path probably retreating into the forests — and, about A.D. 200, replaced the Sarmatians as masters of all southern Russia between the Don and the Dniester. Not until they had accomplished this do they appear to have split into their two main divisions; the Ostrogoths occupying the eastern part of their new dominions, the Visigoths taking the western. From this base the latter gradually expanded farther into Europe until half-way through the third century they expelled the Romans from Dacia and reached the northern banks of the Danube.

That Sarmatian rule had been of positive benefit to the Slavs was now clearly demonstrated. Instead of following earlier precedents and accepting Gothic supremacy as a matter of course, the Antes formed their own state in the region of the Don, Donetz and middle Dnieper where they became a focus of Slav opposition to the newcomers. This Antic state quickly developed sufficient strength for Ermanarich to feel obliged to reduce it to submission at the outset of his short-lived, mid-fourth-century attempt to establish a Gothic empire across eastern Europe. In 370, following the rout of the Gothic army at the hands of the invading Huns, the Antes rose again to deny passage to their fleeing enemies. After liquidating the remnants of the Gothic empire in south Russia, the Huns swept on into central Europe. In the lull that followed their tempestuous passage, the Antes re-established themselves in their original territory; then, with the final disappearance of the Huns, extended it west of the Dniester in the direction of the lower Danube.

Two other tribes of probable Sarmatian origin achieved prominence in the confusion caused by the Hun irruption. These were the Croats and Serbs whose homes in the first century or so of our era appears to have been in the region immediately north of the Caucasus between the Caspian and Azov Seas. Unlike the Antes, at this time these possessed no Slav elements.

> Trying to escape from the onslaught of the Huns [Dvornik writes], the Croats and the Serbs fled towards the north east, beyond the middle Dnieper, where the Antes were settled. Here the Croats may have been joined by a Gothic tribe, and together they established themselves beyond the Carpathian Mountains and gathered the Slav tribes of Galacia, Silesia, and the eastern part of Bohemia — already abandoned by the Quadi and occupied by Slavs — into a kind of state. We have sufficient evidence from the Byzantine imperial writer Constantine Porphyrogennetus, from Arabic sources and also from the Anglo-Saxon King Alfred of the existence of a Croatian state beyond the Carpathians called White Croatia. The Serbs were in some regions mixed with the Croats, especially on the upper Vistula. The bulk of them, however, pushing more towards the north west and following in the footsteps of the Scythian invaders of about 500 B.C., imposed their rule on the Slavic tribes between the Elbe and the Saale rivers, their state being called White Serbia.[1]

About 334, a little earlier than this Croat and Serb migration, the Slavs who had penetrated south of the Carpathian and Tatra mountains successfully revolted against the rule of the Sarmatian tribe of Iazyges. The arrival of the Huns in the fifth century introduced a new but brief period of subservience. Possibly it also brought them their first contacts with the Byzantine Empire, for the mission of the Byzantine general Priscus passed through Slav inhabited territory on its way to treat with Attila at his Pannonian headquarters, which may have been of Slav construction.[2] Also of short duration was a Gothic occupation after the death of Attila in 453. Gothic civil wars and the lure of the wealthy and near defenceless Mediterranean lands of the disintegrating West Roman Empire soon ensured the disappearance of the Goths from central Europe. Land-hungry Slavs, seeking freedom from foreign servitude, poured into the resulting vacuum, and spread across Bohemia, Moravia and the Pannonian Plain as far as the middle reaches of the Danube. Their first recorded large-scale crossing of this great barrier occurred in 517, and, seemingly almost before the Byzantines had realised the fact of their existence, the Slavs were appearing and causing havoc in every part of the Balkans.

In the eyes of contemporary Byzantines, 'this accursed people' — to quote the sixth-century historian, Bishop John of Ephesus — were savage

[1] F. Dvornik, *op. cit.* p. 27.

[2] J. Strzygowski, *Die altslavische Kunst* (Augsburg, 1929), p. 139 *et seq.*

barbarians. Certainly the harsh circumstances of the previous five centuries, as linguistic evidence clearly attests, had resulted in a considerable decline in Slav culture to 'only a humble level of civilisation'.[1] Even so, such an extraordinary propensity for survival and even increase, and the maintenance of such an indelible ethnic consciousness and linguistic unity despite the lack of an alphabet, is not altogether in accord with this — understandably — biased view. Unfortunately, even to-day, we are far from being in the possession of the full picture of the early Slavs; but recent research, coupled with historical perspective, has placed us in probably a very much better position to view this than were the Slavs' sixth- and seventh-century Byzantine contemporaries.

An Indo-European people, the Slavs enter the historical scene as inhabitants of the vast plains, the rolling steppelands and low foothills of eastern Europe. These, with their prairie-like pastures, forests, swamps and marshy river valleys, were their accustomed habitat. Their basic unit was the family, and groups of families combined to form a village community, the affairs of which were controlled by a Council of Elders. Beyond the village came the tribe, but its organisation and general powers of cohesion appear to have been weak unless enforced by the more military and authoritarian character of a foreign suzerain.

> At the opening of history [write Entwistle and Morison] . . . there are no Slavonic words implying political, military or religious organisations more elaborate than the village unit. The words for 'prince', 'king', 'emperor' . . . are all loan words of comparatively recent date and only the South Slavs appear to have known a loose confederacy of village-communities. . . . There was no word for 'priest', but a considerable number for 'wizard', including one of the terms for 'doctor'.[2]

The word for 'prince' was adopted later, probably from Teutonic sources, and the similarity of the terms for 'prince' and 'priest' in Polish and Czech may perhaps be an indication of the gradual assimilation of religious and political functions by the tribal leaders.

The houses of these Slav villages varied considerably according to the local environment, the available building materials and the prosperity of the inhabitants; but, very broadly, they fell into two main types. In the densely forested northern regions, log huts prevailed. Spaciously planned, and constructed of squared tree trunks, they were intended with the help of a massive stove or oven to withstand the cold and wet of the long northern winter. South and east of the main forest belt other methods were needed. The framework was again wood, usually stakes thrust into the ground; but in place of squared logs were the meagre, bent and twisted dwarf trees of the steppes which required reinforcement by clay or mud. The difference in the two methods is even reflected etymologically in the northern Slav word 'stroit' ('built'), and the southern 'sosidat' ('erected'). In both cases the ground plans were usually rectangular with roofs that were either sloping or of the 'saddle' type, but circular houses were also an ancient form. The villages showed a similar adaptability to circumstances. They might straggle along a river bank in a peaceful region, form a circle with all the doors opening on to an inner central space, or, for purposes of defence, occupy a promontory at the confluence of two rivers.

Everywhere, however, the early Slav village unit appears to have been small — easy to evacuate with their flocks and herds at the approach of an enemy and easy to rebuild on the same site or elsewhere when the destruction and danger were over. Primarily agricultural and pastoral, the Slavs also hunted and had, apparently, a particular predilection for honey, from which they made mead. Their lack of political and military organisation left them without the means of aggrandisement and the building of empires; but it also implied a resilience and a quality of diffusion that were important factors in ensuring their survival. The Slavs could be dominated by the simple means of a military occupation of their territory, but the extermination of a people wedded to an existence based on food production and who lacked the possibility of military resistance was not in the interest of any conqueror. Rather the reverse, they were encouraged to maintain their way of life undisturbed. It is in the light of these facts that we can understand the Slav paradoxes of the demi-millennia before and after the

[1] W. J. Entwistle and W. A. Morison, *Russian and the Slavonic Languages* (London, 1949), pp. 26-7.

[2] W. J. Entwistle and W. A. Morison, *op. cit.* pp. 18-19.

beginning of the Christian era — the paradox of survival in a savage epoch through a peaceful concentration on agricultural pursuits, and that of maintaining an undiminished ethnic consciousness and unity while subject to and deeply affected by the influences of neighbouring and ruling peoples.

We know so little that is clear and definite that it is important to try to avoid any tendency to be dogmatic, but there are good reasons to assume that the primitive religion of the Slavs was fundamentally a religion based upon nature. Rybakov, writing on the art of the Ancient Slavs, emphasises the prominence of seasonal festivals in Slav paganism.[1] In winter was celebrated the festival of the Winter god, Koljada.[2] Spring witnessed a varied cycle of Sun festivals demonstrating the joy and relief felt at the end of the long winter and the approach of the warmth and plenty of summer. A straw doll representing the Winter god was drawn through the village and then ceremonially burnt. Round pancakes or buns, symbols of the sun, were baked. Sometimes another sun symbol, the fiery wheel, a tarred wheel set alight upon a pole, formed part of the ceremonies. The Spring god, Radunitsa, or goddess, Vesna, was honoured in ceremonies held to mark the beginning of ploughing and the dousing of fires. In late spring or early summer revels of a Dionysian type celebrated the rites of love.

At the beginning of summer came the festival of the Nymphs, and the honouring of Ladas and Ljols, the Patrons of Love. Summer was also the period of rites and sacrifices to Perun, the terrible god of thunder and lightning whose later aspects included the deification of War and who was afterwards transposed into Orthodox Christianity in the person of St Elias. As summer drew on and changed into autumn, social and religious activity centred around the harvest celebrations. These included sacrificial rites of thanksgiving, the wearing of festive clothes, and the hanging of wreaths in honour of the family's ancestors. A special corner of the hut was dedicated to the spirits of the ancestors and, at this time, was decked with wreaths and fresh, embroidered linen cloths, a custom reflected in the decorations of an icon or a corner of a room devoted to the family saint that is still a characteristic of many Slav homes to-day.

Such a calendar of religious feasts was a natural feature of the lives of a wholly agricultural people existing in the geographical conditions of their early east European homeland. This fact, and the long persistence of related traditions into the Christian era and even into Christianity itself over all the widely spread Slav territories, gives us some grounds for assuming that it was a form of religious expression native to the Slavs rather than adopted by them from a neighbouring or ruling race. The issue is by no means so clear when we consider the various Slav gods without direct connections with the seasons or the agricultural calendar. A number of them have close affinities with Iranian deities, reflecting both the Indo-European origin of the Slavs and their long period of Scythian and Sarmatian domination. Dvornik points out that Perun corresponded to the Vedic Parjanya and the Hittite Teshub. Deification of the Sun, another Iranian characteristic, was also, to a certain extent, practised by the Slavs, who regarded the Sun and Fire as the children of the god Svarogŭ. 'Like the Iranian Verethragna,' Dvornik writes, 'the Slavic Svarogŭ is represented as generating the heat and light of the sun, called Xŭrsŭ Dažĭbogŭ by the Slavs. These words have survived in some old Polish and Serbian proper names. Xŭrsŭ (Chors) is obviously borrowed from the Iranian expression Xuršid, designating the personified sun.'[3] It also corresponds to the Persian royal name Chosroes or Khusrau. The Iranian connection is made even more obvious by the meaning of the Slav term Dažĭbogŭ or Dashbog — He who brings salvation.

Other Slav deities related to the Iranian pantheon included Stribog, the Wind god, whose children were the winds; Simargl, a winged monster, who in Sarmatian mythology guarded the tree producing the seed for every plant and who is seemingly related to the Iranian Senmurv, a dragon with a peacock's tail; Mokoš, who corresponded to the Persian Anahita, and, as was indicated by her name, meaning 'moist', the goddess of water and possibly rain, as well as being the enigmatic goddess of weaving and a fertility deity.

[1] B. A. Rybakov, 'The Art of the Ancient Slavs', chap. 2 of the *History of Russian Art*, ed. by I. E. Grabar, W. N. Lazarew and W. S. Kemenov (Moscow, 1953) (Russian); (Dresden, 1957) (German).

[2] The names and, to some extent, the functions of the Slav gods vary from region to region and epoch to epoch.

[3] F. Dvornik, *op. cit.* p. 49.

Among the western Slavs gods of slightly different natures have been identified. They include Svjatovit, a warrior god armed with a sword and holding a cornucopia; Šiva, the goddess of life and fruitfulness; Radogost, who corresponded to Mercury in his aspect as the god of commerce. A latter-day West Slav god was Trojan, but this divinity was, in fact, none other than the mighty Roman Emperor Trajan, deified after his death by his opponents as well as by his fellow Romans.

Svjatovit, however, was no more than another aspect or interpretation of Svarogŭ. Dvornik points out that 'Svarogŭ, like Verethragna, was a warrior god, a giver of virility and strength. This virility — Slavic Jendrŭ, which is reminiscent of the Indian Indra — had various manifestations, a fact which the Polabian Slavs symbolised by providing their idols with several heads. The names Sventovitŭ, Jarevitŭ, Porovitŭ and Ruevitŭ, given to the deity by the Polabian Slavs, are possibly best explained by this.'[1] Triglav, the Slav three-headed god, worshipped by the Slovenian Slavs when they settled among the Julian Alps in the sixth century, is still remembered to-day by the towering triple-peaked mountain, the highest in Yugoslavia, which has borne his name for the ensuing fourteen centuries.

Veles, or Volos, the god of flocks, of cattle and, by projection, the god of wealth, was essentially a divinity reflecting the pastoral aspects of Slav existence. Known also to the Czechs, his worship may have originated among the eastern, steppeland Slavs. On the evidence of place-names, however, it is clear that he was also known to the Slavs who settled in the southern Balkans.

We still have to consider the deity who was perhaps the most profound of all the influences affecting the religious attitudes of the primitive Slavs — the Great Earth Mother Goddess, called variously Bereginja, Shitnaja Baba, Roshanitsa Djeva and other names. Mokoš and Šiva were aspects of her divinity, and possibly in certain places and times were interpretations of her. But in view of the agricultural proclivities of the Slavs it is not surprising that it is the Great Mother rather than any of the other gods whom we find generally represented, not only in discoveries of ornamental carving and metalwork, but still to-day in certain traditional peasant designs, particularly those found in Belorussia, surrounded by various ancient symbols of life and fruitfulness (Pl. 7*c*). The Great Goddess had been, as we have seen, the chief figure of the religion of the Scythians, in whose art, too, she, alone among their gods, is represented. Nevertheless, it needs to be borne in mind that she was worshipped in southern Russia before the coming of the Scythians.[2]

The examples of Great Goddess images illustrated in Plate 4, whether fibulae of the seventh to tenth centuries or embroidery of the nineteenth, demonstrate that the Goddess associated with two supporters was a deeply rooted Slav concept. It was not, however, all-prevalent; the Goddess could be represented with a single attendant (Pl. 7*c*, cf. 6*c*). She also appeared in a completely stylised form, with only her outline recognisable and her supporters as simple geometric shapes.

Among certain of the Slavs' western neighbours, however — the Thracians, the Celts and the Mediterranean peoples — the cult of the Great Goddess possessed a chthonian element, bringing in the underworld as a third religious dimension far more prominently than it appeared in the religious beliefs of the east. This feature was accepted by the pagan Slavs, although whether it occurred at an early or at a late stage in their development is still a question mark. The clearest evidence of its acceptance lies in the four-sided Zbrucz idol, a *circa* tenth-century wooden figure discovered in Galicia. This consists of a tall pillar, each side of which carries relief carvings divided into three distinct zones. Rybakov has convincingly interpreted these as Heaven, the world of the gods; Earth, the dwelling-place of men; and the Underworld whose deity must bear upon his back the whole weight of Earth and Heaven.[3] The four topmost figures all wear a single, conical-shaped hat, similar to those worn by princes and aristocratic saints portrayed on mediaeval Russian icons. Two are male and two female, and it seems likely that they may represent the presiding

[1] F. Dvornik, *op. cit.* p. 49.

[2] T. Talbot Rice, *The Scythians* (London, 1927), p. 85; M. Rostovtzeff, 'La Culte de la Grande Déesse dans la Russie Méridionale', *Revue des Études Grecques*, vol. 32.

[3] B. A. Rybakov, *op. cit.* chap. 2, 'The Art of the Ancient Slavs'.

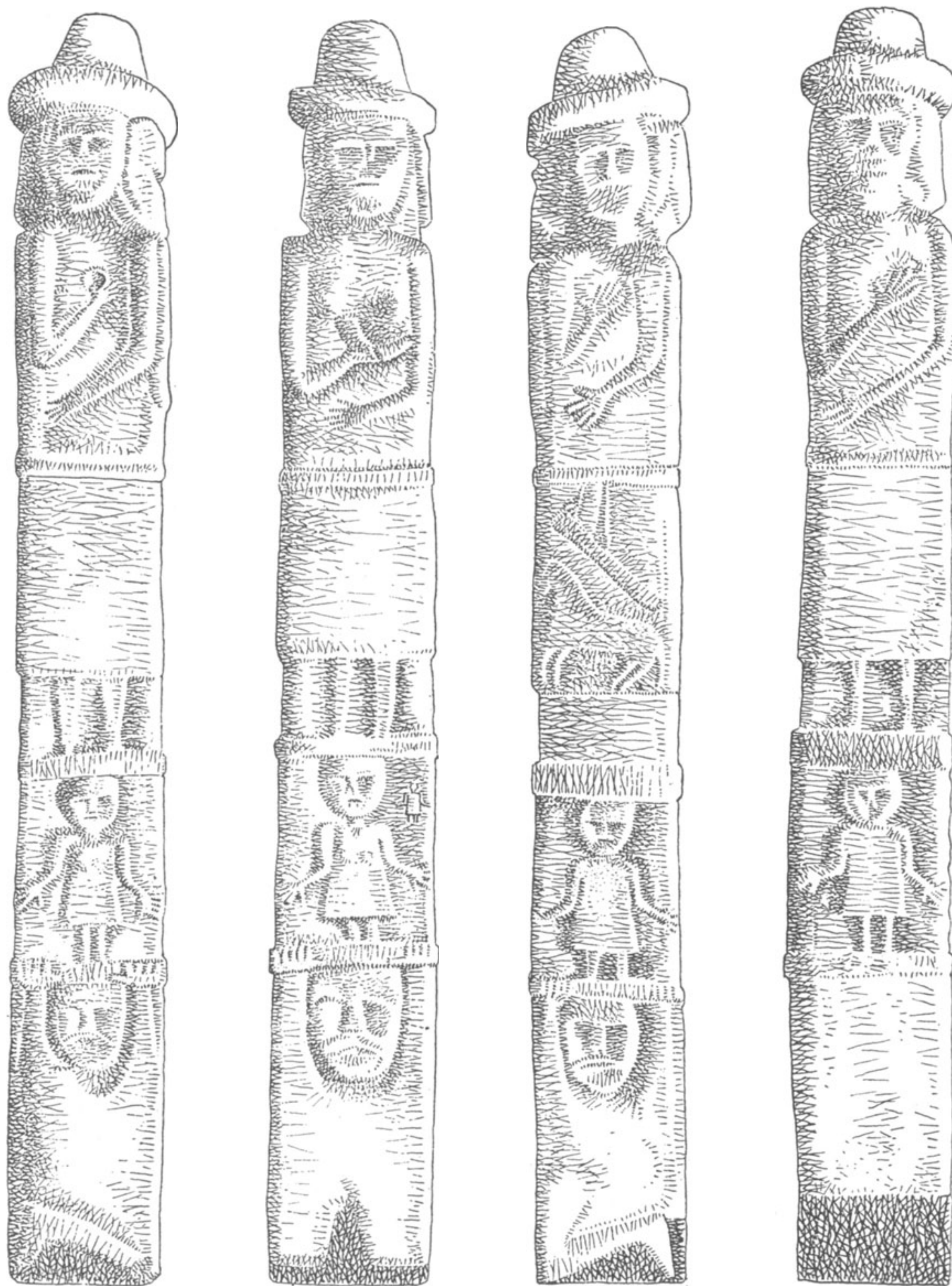


Fig. 42. IDOL OF ZBRUCZ. Slav idol found in Galicia, Southern Poland.
The four sides representing seasonal deities

deity of the particular season. The terrestrial figure below is of the same sex as the deity. The presentation of each side and, according to Rybakov's interpretation, each season, is as follows:

Spring	*Summer*	*Autumn*	*Winter*
1. Goddess—ring on finger of right hand	1. Goddess — ox horn (of abundance) in right hand	1. God — with sword in its sheath and horse	1. God — no attributes
2. Woman standing	2. Woman standing with child above left shoulder	2. Man standing	2. Man standing
3. Moustached figure kneeling sideways with arms upraised to carry earth and heaven	3. Moustached figure kneeling frontally with arms upraised to carry earth and heaven	3. Moustached figure kneeling sideways with arms upraised to carry earth and heaven	3. (Blank)

Whence came the Slav conception of a god of the underworld supporting the earth with his upraised arms? Baltrušaitis illustrates a fragment of a fifth- or sixth-century tombstone standing in Adiaman in Armenia with a figure in this position.[1] Corbels in the cathedrals of Koutais (1003) and Mzhet (1020) display figures similarly posed, that is to say, with the upraised arms bearing a weight and not simply in the attitude of prayer. South-west from the Caucasus we have the strange great Hittite monument at Iflatun in Asia Minor where winged solar discs are borne aloft by rows of priestly (?) attendants. South-east we find a similar conception in ancient Persia. 'Not only the gods and their thrones', writes L'Orange, 'but also their habitation — the temple and palace — soared in the conception of the remoter East, in the spheres, borne up aloft by animals and demons. Also the Persian-Arabian tradition and Byzantine legends derived therefrom know of such heavenly palaces. We only recall the Persian king, Kaikaus, who had an entire city built and carried by demons in space.'[2] As this conception of the throne as a divine symbol being borne aloft had originated from Persia it seems likely that it was ultimately from here, as was the case with many of their ideas, that the Slavs drew their inspiration for the physical details of the underworld figure. But the conception of the underworld itself was probably adopted from their neighbours in the west.

Idols, in fact, loomed prominently in pagan Slav religion. Although the relatively few finds to date hardly permit us to generalise from them, it is at least clear that the Slavs were accustomed freely to portray their gods 'in the round' in the fashion generally favoured by the European peoples, instead of confining themselves to carving in relief as was the common practice in western Asia.

This impression that the Slavs were accustomed so to view their gods is confirmed by the results of excavations of their ancient temples. A religious site typical of the vast swampy and forested lowlands of eastern Europe consisted of two associated but separate parts. One was a timber or perhaps reed and wattle hall, used for meetings and banquets of a religious nature. The other was a circular, flat-topped, artificial mound. Its sides were strengthened with fired clay as a protection against the waters and the whole encompassed by a circular palisade, some fifty to sixty metres in diameter, which, perhaps, stood upon a clay and earthen wall. Within was a second concentric circle about twenty metres in diameter, either in the form of a second palisade or a ring of tall stakes of greater height than the outer fence. On top of these stakes might stand skulls of horses, rams, oxen, or since extinct aurochs. In other cases the stakes might be roughly shaped after human forms, or carry carved representations of gods or sacred symbols. Exactly in the centre of the two circles, and beneath a saddle roof borne on high poles that towered above them, stood the image of the god to whom the temple was dedicated. In front of this idol was a sacrificial table of stone or fired clay that, with an exactitude paralleling the tracing of the circles, was oriented according to the cardinal points, the long axis pointing towards the east.

The earliest temples to have been discovered, such as that of Staroje Kaschirskoje (considered to be of the fifth to fourth century B.C.), were situated in the middle of a settlement. In the course of time, however, they tended to be built outside the confines of the village in a remote and secluded position among the neighbouring swamps or lakes. There, undisturbed by the noise and bustle of a settlement, hidden among their monotonous and inhospitable environment, and protected

[1] J. Baltrušaitis, *Études sur l'art médiéval en Géorgie et en Arménie* (Paris, 1929), Pl. lxx, 116.

[2] H. P. L'Orange, *Studies on the Iconography of Cosmic Kingship in the Ancient World* (Oslo, 1953), p. 62.

by their difficult access, which was only obtained by little known paths, these sanctuaries remained powerful and stubborn strongholds of paganism even into the twelfth and thirteenth centuries of the Christian era. Not only did they survive bitter crusades, persecutions, and forced conversions, but they continued to dominate rural life long after Christianity had been fully and officially adopted by the princes and townsmen of the new feudal states of which the peasantry remained a reactionary part.

In the non-swampy, mountainous lands of central and south-eastern Europe into which the Slavs were steadily infiltrating, the temple pattern had, of necessity, to be adapted. A favoured site seems to have been a river confluence, which afforded natural protection on two sides of a triangle. Nevertheless, in its essentials and in its rites, the Slav temple stayed unaffected by its change of environment. A noteworthy passage in the history written by Michael the Syrian (quoted on pages 91-2) emphasises that during their invasions of the Balkans towards the end of the sixth century the Slavs looted ciboria from the churches. Their chief sat enthroned beneath the ciborium from Corinth. It seems clear from this that they associated the Christian ciboria with their own roofed temple centre-pieces.

Even more remarkable is the small degree of change or development that occurred with the passage of centuries. We can compare the archaeological evidence of the early temples with the description by Saxo Grammaticus (*circa* 1150–1206) of the temple of Svjatovit at Arkona, on the island of Rügen in the south-west Baltic. This, we are told, was magnificently built of wood. It had a red painted roof and was surrounded by a carefully fashioned fence, ornamented with painted figures. Inside stood four curtained pillars. Here were the divine attributes of the god, a saddle, a bridle and a sword, and the venerated image of the god himself. Horns and other ornaments decorated the temple. The writings of Adam of Bremen (*circa* 1075) and Presbyter Helmold (*circa* 1170) confirm the general prevalence of this temple form among their northern Slav contemporaries as well as testifying to the great and widespread prestige of certain of the Slav oracles. Until the combined impact of Christianity, of foreign powers, of urbanisation and of the feudal state began to affect the fundamental conditions of social life in the ninth or tenth and subsequent centuries, the Slav religion, and the Slav language, remained astonishingly stable. The fifteen hundred years or so that had elapsed since the Slavs had first made their appearance in history had brought an increased technical accomplishment and the trappings of a more prosperous standard of living, but little else. Extraordinary as this is, it must be recalled that right down to our own day Slav history reads as a remarkable story of tenaciously held conservatism.

An integral part of the basic religious themes of the pagan Slavs were the superstitions which governed the conduct and events of daily life. Not only was each house inhabited by its individual spirit; every tree, stream and spring was similarly possessed. In every river there existed a nymph or waterman, in every swamp a dreaded 'bagnik', or will-o'-the-wisp. The gloomy, impenetrable depths of every forest sheltered its wood spirit with green hair and gnarled branches for arms. In order to achieve a good harvest or a successful hunt, time unending had to be spent sacrificing to and otherwise enlisting the help of the favourable spirits, and in propitiating and defeating the wicked ends of the malevolent ones. The latter were chiefly symbolised by the animals of the forest. The bear was the dreaded Lord of the Woods. Such terror did he inspire that the superstitious Slavs forbore to name him, and describing him instead as 'Med-wed' — the Honey-Eater or He who Loves Honey. Sometimes the bear was represented on weapons as a means of striking fear in the hearts of the enemy. Not unnaturally the wolf was similarly a symbol of dread, and werewolf legends figured strongly in ancient Slav mythology. On a more minor scale was the hare; for one to run across one's path was an omen of ill health or bad luck.

Creatures of the fields and the air, on the other hand, were generally bringers of good fortune. Prominent among them were the cock, the prophet among birds; the aurochs or the ox, the embodiment of fruitfulness — an ox horn customarily represented the horn of abundance; ducks and geese, symbols of water and of Mokoš and the Earth Mother. The horse and the swan had a particular significance in the ancient Slav religion. A golden horse-drawn chariot with fiery wheels bore the sun across the sky by day and then, at nightfall, when the sun had reached the western

horizon, the two horses changed into swans to take the sun across the waters of the night to regain the east in time for the following dawn.

The primitive Slavs would have known the horse from their nomadic Scythian overlords, but it is unlikely that they themselves were normally a mounted people. Besides their fierce warrior masters, probably few other than their princes would have been accustomed to ride on horseback. The probable association of the offices of prince and priest may well be a simple explanation of the traditional embroidery motive of a female figure, the Great Goddess, with one or two horsemen (Pls. 4*d*, 7*c*). It would, however, be too facile to seek such a straightforward origin of a principal motive of folk art, for the horse had other symbolic aspects. Moreover, the Thracians, the Slavs' south-western neighbours, it will be recalled, not only practised the chthonian cult of the Great Goddess through their worship of Bendis, but used the symbol of the hero horseman on funeral steles to signify immortality. Men, the ancient Moon god of Asia Minor, was similarly represented as a figure on horseback.

Very few examples of Slav art of the early centuries of the Christian era and the period immediately preceding it have survived. The early Slavs used wood, not stone or marble, as their main means of construction. They had no landed aristocracy or wealthy trading community with the opportunities and leisure for patronising art for art's sake. In the Slav settlements existence was communal and at peasant level; consequently, art developed within a severely practical context. Such work included carving the beams, doors and other parts of the houses; but the object was not to beautify them, that it did so was only coincidental and due to the natural skill and artistic inclinations of the workman. Each single piece of carving had for its purpose the exclusion of evil powers, usually by placing representations of good spirits at strategic points, such as doors and windows, keyholes, the stove or the gable. Thus horses, with and without riders, birds, deer, snakes, dogs were some of the leading animal symbols appearing and, with them such symbols of the sun as rosettes, crosses and crosses within a circle representing the sun chariot's wheels (Pls. 4, 7*c*).

These same figures appeared on important articles of furniture and, in fact, were still appearing at the beginning of this century on, for instance. spinning wheels and chairs in many parts of eastern Europe. For similar reasons they were also embroidered on articles of clothing, on towels and on cloths intended for ceremonies of a family nature. Fortunately they were also used on such metal objects as belt buckles, brooches, spurs, harness and weapons, some specimens of which have been recovered in the course of excavations. It is from such items, and from traditional peasant embroidery designs, and from legends, popular fairy tales and folk customs, that we are able to reconstruct some picture of the ancient Slav art that for the most part perished with the decay or destruction of the materials upon which it was wrought.

Material decay was not the only enemy of early Slav art. Christianity converted certain pagan Slav symbols to its own purposes. The Great Mother Earth Goddess with her upraised arms was assimilated into the Virgin 'Orante', her mounted attendants into the warrior saints, St George, St Demetrius and others. Svjatovit became the Serbian hero, Marko, Perun developed into St Elias, and Veles or Volos into St Vlaho or Blasius. But there were certain material evidences of paganism with which Christianity found compromise impossible, and these it set out to eradicate mercilessly. In particular, this applied to the idols and sacred temples, to which, in the region of present-day northern Germany and Poland, the Slavs clung with passionate obstinacy until their final conversion, accompanied by a savage destruction of their pagan symbols, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

Presbyter Helmold gives a contemporary account of how he helped to destroy one such 'place of profanation' near Oldenburg in 1156. Led by the bishop, he writes, 'we entered the atrium, heaped the fence around the sacred trees, and, having set fire to a heap of wood, made a funeral pyre, not without dread lest we be overwhelmed by a tumult of the inhabitants'. Twelve years later King Waldemaar of Denmark led a crusade against the pagan Slavs of Rügen. Hopelessly outnumbered, the Rügiani were obliged to surrender their sacred idol of Svjatovit. The triumphant Christians dragged the idol through their ranks, beat it with sticks and then burnt it in the sight of its defeated worshippers. A resettlement of the conquered lands by Christian immigrants completed the process

and, at least in outward form and symbol, Christianity finally supplanted paganism. In such circumstances of violence it is little wonder that the monumental religious art of the pagan Slavs, together with idols constructed of precious metals, suffered almost entire destruction during the Middle Ages. The Zbrucz idol is — to-day — unique of its type, but even as late as Helmold's time it was apparently by no means so. One cannot help wondering what an untold tale of heroism and religious fervour may not be behind its preservation.

Yet did Christianity succeed in its policy of ruthless eradication of the Slav idols ? Or did a legacy linger on, in the same way that a legacy of sun worship persisted, and continued for centuries to be featured in western Macedonian church buildings ? In 1955 Kozarac, acting on behalf of the Museum of Kosovo and Metohije at Priština, discovered an unusual form of wooden pole in the village of Lauš in the agricultural district of Drenica. Carved in 1950 of oak, the pole was the work of a partially crippled, thirty-year-old Albanian peasant, who combined the occupations of carpentry and farming. It followed the rough shape of a human figure, a shape which was additionally substantiated by the specific nomenclature of its various divisions. At the time of threshing, writes Kozarac, this pole, with others of a non-anthropomorphous character, was decorated with fifteen ears and stalks of wheat as though it were being offered a sacrifice. The popular explanation of the custom in the locality was that it was done *për bereqet*, that is to say, in order to obtain abundance (or fertility).[1]

This form of harvest pole is, it seems, unique in the district, and the idea of its carving was the peasant's own. Nevertheless, the names of the pole's upper divisions—*krye*, head; *qafa*, neck; and *bark*, belly or womb — indicate the likelihood of a tradition that had apparently been lost. This tradition may, of course, have its origins in something other than pagan Slav customs; but the possibility, even probability, of a direct though attentuated link cannot be dismissed lightly.

We have seen that in religious art, as in religious ideology, the Slavs reflected neighbouring influences as well as maintaining a conservative core that was purely Slav. In the Middle Ages the splitting up of the previously more or less homogeneous Slav peoples into feudal states and principalities tended to promote the ascendancy of foreign influences or individual local backgrounds. The linear reliefs and interlacings of early Croatian Christian art, for instance, are as strikingly indicative of the impact of Celtic and Lombard art as the reliefs of Vladimir-Suzdal architecture are of their Scythian ancestry. However, the Slavs also performed the function — the importance of which we are not yet in a position to estimate but which was certainly analogous to the part played by the Semitic peoples — of being a bridge between East and West. In fact the historic roles of the Slavs and Semites parallel each other to a considerable degree, even to their simultaneous, although unrelated expansion — south and north respectively — in the seventh century which, by temporarily severing the routes connecting Europe and Asia, were a major factor in the schism between Constantinople and Rome.

Whatever the constructive potentialities of the Slavs, it is understandable that the Byzantines did not view the newcomers, who, in 517, raided Dardania, Macedonia, Epirus and as far south as Thessaly, as anything but yet another barbarian threat to their existence. Byzantine administrators had previously had little cause to pay attention to this seemingly unorganised, peasant people, whose lot appeared to be service and subjection to more warlike or more efficient masters. Although we have no definite documentary evidence, it is likely that for a long time small groups of Slavs had been infiltrating the Byzantine provinces and had found there a peaceful, if lowly livelihood. But, from the second decade of the sixth century, it was as if a sluggish but navigable river had suddenly burst its banks and become a raging, destructive flood.

[1] V. Kozarac, 'The Drenica Pillar', *Glasnik Muzeja Kossova i Metohije*, I (Priština, 1956), pp. 317-18 (Croatian).

Chapter VIII

The Slav Settlement in the Balkans

THROUGHOUT the reign of Justinian I (527–65), and particularly during the long period of Gothic wars in Italy, Avar and Slav raids intensified and added to the confusion and devastation already being caused by marauding bands of Bulgars and Teutons. Justinian was obliged to embark upon an extensive and costly rebuilding of cities and fortifications throughout the peninsula. According to Procopius some six hundred fortified positions were either built or strengthened between the Danube and the Isthmus of Corinth at this time. Macedonia, he informs us, was defended by forty-six fortified towns and forts, Epirus by forty-five. In Dardania eight new forts were built and sixty-one restored. This was no mere instance of Justinian's enthusiasm for building, but essentially a defence in depth, and a tacit acknowledgement that the imperial armies had forsaken all pretence of being able to defend their Danubian frontier. In fact, in 535, Justinian was obliged to remove the seat of the Governor of Illyricum from Sirmium on the Danube to the comparative safety of Thessalonica. Comparative, for in the same year, when Aristides, Archbishop of Thessalonica, was asked by the imperial governor to go on a mission to Constantinople, the leading citizens protested against the city being left without its spiritual and generally accepted temporal leader at a time of critical danger. The protest was effective and someone else was sent in his place. Security in the Balkans during this time had reached a low ebb. In 536 Slav tribes penetrated to the Adriatic and the outskirts of Salona. In 540 Hun bands raided as far as the Isthmus of Corinth. In 547 Slavs reached the walls of Dyrrhachium and, in 551, threatened Thessalonica. In 558 bands of Kotrigurs, a Hun group allied to the Bulgars, even succeeded in plundering the outskirts of Constantinople.

A crucial period in history had arrived. Justinian enlisted the Antes, now settled in the north-east of the Balkan peninsula, as foederati. There was seemingly no reason why the other less organised Slav tribes massing north of Illyricum west of the Iron Gates and, besides raiding, wishing to settle with their families, as probably some had already succeeded in doing, should not gradually have been brought under the influence of Christianity and Byzantine civilisation. If successive relatively barbarian nations had been able, without difficulty, to establish their authority over the Slavs, it surely would have been easy for the Byzantines. Perhaps this was the intention. Perhaps there were far-sighted Byzantine statesmen and provincial officials who envisaged the fortified Balkan cities as centres from which Byzantine influence would radiate among the surrounding Slavs, with the short-term weapons of war gradually giving way to the longer-term means of peace.

In the case of two monuments, the South Church at Caričin Grad and the Domed Church at Konjuh, there is evidence that the Byzantines had begun to develop some such constructive policy with regard to the Slavs. However, a revolt of Turkic tribes in far-off northern Mongolia occurred at the same time as the Balkan defences were being reinforced, and doomed to failure anything but the most speedy and vigorous action.

The catastrophic Hun irruption of the fourth century had been the result of an Avar uprising against Hun rule in north China. As the only alternative to total extermination the defeated Huns had fled west to wrest a new empire from the relatively civilised and settled peoples of Europe. Now, midway through the sixth century, the Avar conquerors of the Huns were similarly overthrown by subject Turkic tribes. In consequence, another wave of savage, barbarian horsemen swept across the Asian steppes, this time an alliance of Avar and Turkic groups. In the region of the Volga they met and defeated another Turkic tribe, the Bulgars. Most of the Bulgars accepted Avar rule, but a minority fled ahead of their conquerors and found their way into Lombard Pannonia. The Avars and their allies followed them westwards and, breaking through the Carpathian barrier, combined with the Lombards to wipe out the Pannonian Gepids. They then occupied the whole of the Pannonian Plain, reducing to subservience the earlier settled Slavs, while the Lombards, probably aghast at the savagery of their prospective neighbours and recent allies, crossed the eastern ranges of the Alps to establish themselves in northern Italy.

Justinian reacted characteristically to the first signs of the Avars' presence on the Byzantine frontiers, subsidising them to attack those whose earlier presence had created a more immediate danger. To support the devil of whom one was ignorant against the devil one knew was typical of Byzantine diplomacy, but it was based on the assumption that the latter was in a stronger position, and that, therefore, Byzantine aid to the former would result in a mutually enfeebling war. In this case the basic assumption was a fallacy. The Avar demands merely became more and more extortionate, more and more insolent, their menaces more and more dangerous; and, in the exhausted state of the Empire, the wherewithal to pay became more and more difficult to find. Justinian's successor, Justin II (565–78), defiantly refused to continue the tribute. The Avar reaction was not immediate, for they were still consolidating their new position. But, in 568, having disposed of first the Gepids and then the Lombards, they were ready. By a quick advance, Justin was able to save Sirmium, but the Avars' destructive raids speedily obliged him to renew the Byzantine Empire's traditional tributary payments.

Fate, as well as time, was against the Empire. Persian wars obliged Tiberius II (578–82) to concentrate on the preservation of his Asiatic dominions, clearly now, after the loss of Italy and the devastation of the Balkans, the core of the Empire. To the Slavs, massed on the lower Danube frontier, this concentration of the main Byzantine forces in the east offered a temptation against which no subsidy was of avail. Even had the frontier been heavily defended, the heavy hand of the Avars, the impetus of their own 'völkerwanderung' and the pressure of population from behind must have produced a serious crisis. Inevitably and irresistibly the Slavs swarmed across the Danube.

John of Ephesus describes the invasions:

> The accursed people, the Slavs, advanced and invaded the whole of Greece, the environs of Thessalonica and the whole of Thrace. They conquered many towns and fortresses, they ravaged, burned, pillaged and dominated the country, which they inhabited as if it were their own land. This lasted four years, as long as the Basileus was making war against the Persians; in this way they had a free run of the country until God drove them out. Their devastations reached as far as the outer walls (of Constantinople). They took away all the imperial flocks and herds. Now (A.D. 584) they are still quietly settled in the Roman provinces without anxiety or fear, laying waste, murdering and burning. They grow rich, they possess gold and silver, they possess flocks and horses, and many arms. They have learned to wage war better than the Byzantines.

This Slav invasion had begun about 578. In 580 Tiberius threw away his final chance of preserving the Balkan provinces by winning over the Slavs to the Byzantine side. In desperation he risked an appeal to Baian and his Avars, now indisputably established in Pannonia, to attack the Slavs in their rear. Baian came, but with no intention of wasting his strength on anything so unprofitable as policing marauding bands of Slavs. Instead he laid siege to the great imperial outpost of Sirmium. Tiberius had no possibility of relieving it and, in 582, after holding out for two years, the city was surrendered. Far from creating a diversion, the Avar intervention had resulted in the loss of the Empire's principal frontier fortress and the devastation of most of northern Illyricum. Of perhaps even greater import, it had definitely delivered the Slavs

into the Avar, rather than the Byzantine sphere of influence.

We have no more than a vague knowledge of the history of Thessalonica during this period and almost none at all regarding the rest of Macedonia. Apart from John of Ephesus, who lived at Constantinople between 558 and 585, the only extant contemporary account comes from the *Miracula S. Demetrii*. This is the work of various authors, the earliest of whom was John, Bishop of Thessalonica from about 617 to 626 or later. Unfortunately the *Miracula* appear to have been subject to a great deal of rewriting and re-editing in later centuries, mainly from the viewpoint of religious propaganda. The picture supplied by these not entirely reliable authorities is further filled in by a twelfth-century historian, Michael the Syrian, who appears in general to be well informed. As much as the principal facts of history related by these chroniclers, who by no means always agree among themselves, with other writers, or with probability, the minor and incidental details they relate help us to some idea of what life was like in Thessalonica and its environs during the dangerous years of the Avar and Slav invasions.[1]

Thus, the *Miracula* tell of the first Avar and Slav siege of Thessalonica, occurring probably around 581, that it surprised the inhabitants while they were celebrating a night mass in the church of St Demetrius. Suddenly it happened that the ciborium in the church caught fire. The prefect of Dacia, who was fortunately present, saw the danger to the large congregation and tried to persuade them to leave. Meeting with no success, he shouted, 'Citizens, the enemy stands outside our walls'. The apparently familiar call was immediately effective and the congregation, who were completely deceived, ran out to arm themselves and man the ramparts — just in time, it is recorded, to save the city from the unsuspected attackers. The citizens, seeing that their opponents were comparatively small in numbers, sortied and routed them. We learn, however, from an account of the invasion by Michael the Syrian, that other parts of Macedonia and its neighbouring provinces were less fortunate. Michael writes:

> In the third year of Tiberius the accursed people of the Slavs came out and overran Hellade, the region of the Thessalonians, and Thrace, which they ravaged and burned. They invaded the region and spread out there. They took the Emperor's herds of horses; these barbarous men, who (until now) could not show themselves outside forests and covered places and did not know what a weapon was except for two or three little lances or darts, learned the art of warfare. For a long time they dominated the country of the Romans.

The next siege of Thessalonica appears likely to have occurred in 586, when the city was suffering from the plague. Incensed by the refusal of Maurice to increase their tribute, the Avars invaded southern Illyricum, making Thessalonica, its chief city, their main objective. The inhabitants only learned of their danger when the Avars were no more than a day's march away. Nevertheless, four or five days seem to have elapsed before the first assault took place. Again this came at night, but, according to the *Miracula S. Demetrii*, the invaders' intelligence was amiss. When dawn came they found themselves in possession not of Thessalonica but a nearby monastery. They immediately attacked the city, but, although many of the garrison's best troops had accompanied the governor on a visit south to parts of Greece, and a number of the leading citizens had gone to Constantinople to lay complaints against the governor, and, moreover, despite the ravages of the plague, the city's defences stood firm. The plague, in fact, may have been the city's salvation for, after a short time, it spread among the Avars and obliged them to retire. The city's leadership at this time seems to have been assumed by its archbishop, Eusebius. His successor, John, writes a little maliciously in the *Miracula S. Demetrii* that it was his constant habit to relate the events, not omitting his own active and glorious part, to all around him.

From Michael the Syrian we learn a little of what was happening elsewhere in the Balkans:

> The Romans were attacked again (under Maurice) by the peoples of the accursed barbarians with unkempt hair who are called Avars, who burst from the extremities of the Orient, and also by the western people of

[1] O. Tafrali, *Thessalonique, des origines au XIVe siècle* (Paris, 1919), pp. 5-142. (The account of Thessalonica's struggle with the Avars and Slavs is to a large extent based upon Tafrali's history.) The *Miracula S. Demetrii* appear in: Migne, *Patr. Grec.* cxvi; Abbé Tougard, *De l'histoire profane dans les actes des Bollandistes* (Paris, 1874).

the Slavs and by others who are called Longobards. The latter were also under the domination of Chagan, king of the Avars. They went to besiege two towns of the Romans and other fortresses. They said to the inhabitants, 'Go out, sow and reap ; we shall only take from you half of the tax. . . . The people of the Slavs made prisoners everywhere ; (they took away the objects) of worship from the churches and great ciboria in solid chariots, for instance, the ciborium from the church at Corinth, which (their king) had set up instead of a tent and beneath which he sat. Then the Romans took into their employ the people of the Antae who threw themselves upon the country of the Slavs, which they occupied and pillaged. They took away its riches and they burned it. This country was to the west of the river called the Danube. When the Slavs learned that their country was laid waste, they roared like the lion with its prey ; they gathered in thousands and set themselves to ceaseless pillage. They were not able to advance far enough to besiege the imperial city. They turned towards the city of Anchialos, near Thebes, and towards the thermal springs of that place. Many of them were massacred by the army which was found there. Finally, they overthrew the walls ; they found the purple vestments which Anastasia, the wife of Tiberius, had given as a votive offering to the church while she was on her way to the springs. Chagan put them on, saying : 'Whether the Emperor of the Romans wishes it or not her royalty has been given me.' Soon afterwards he was frightened by the news that the people of the Turks were pursuing him. They retreated to Sirmium, fearing that (the Turks) would loot the inhabitants and all their riches. (Maurice) having sent gold to Chagan, they retreated.

But for Thessalonica, and doubtless for most of Macedonia, the Avar withdrawal was not the end of their misfortunes. Famine followed the plague, for what the Avars and their allies had not been able to carry off, they had destroyed. Normal trade and communications had been completely disrupted and ships were afraid to call at the ports lest they should find there either the plague or the savage barbarians. This desperate situation was finally ended, we are told in the *Miracula*, by St Demetrius bringing ships of wheat to his city. During the reign of Phocas (602–10), Thessalonica again suffered from a famine, which extended throughout the Empire, and once more the patron saint intervened to bring in the sorely needed supplies.

Thessalonica's third Avar-Slav siege occurred between 617 and 619. Heraclius (610–41) was emperor and John, one of the authors of the first book of the *Miracula S. Demetrii*, was archbishop of the city. Great hordes of Slav warriors, with their families in their train, advanced on Macedonia, Epirus, Achaia, the Aegean islands and even attacked the shores of Asia Minor. Thessalonica, the *Miracula* tell us, was besieged by land and sea. The population resisted bravely, but the situation was desperate, and their trust was more in St Demetrius than in their own strength. Again the saint did not fail them. A sudden storm wrecked a large number of the enemy's boats and, in the subsequent confusion, a sortie by the garrison earned a resounding victory. The Slav leader, Prince Chatzon, sued for peace and requested permission to enter the city as a friend. The authorities of the city agreed, but the sight of the Slav chief, whose followers had been responsible for the deaths of so many of the city's defenders, provoked a riot led by women whose relatives were among the killed. In spite of all the authorities could do to honour the safe conduct they had given, Chatzon was stoned to death.

This treachery cost the Greek population of Macedonia and the Thessalonians dearly. The Slavs, already deeply impressed by the civilisation and wealth of the Greeks, were once more susceptible to being settled as friendly allies in the depopulated countryside and there to have been gradually brought under Christian Byzantine influence. Instead, they were now filled with contempt and hatred for the perpetrators of the savage act. The siege of Thessalonica was immediately resumed with redoubled ferocity. Although unsuccessful in their effort to reduce the city, the Slavs did not retire. Throughout the immediately accessible rural areas of Macedonia a heavy toll of revenge was exacted upon the Greek population, and in the vacant places thus created the Slavs settled with their families.

Better to accomplish the destruction of the Greeks the Slavs called on the aid of their Avar overlords. Well pleased with such an excuse to break their treaty with Heraclius and, receiving at the same time a similar appeal from the Persians, whom the Byzantines had severely defeated in 626, the Avars invaded the imperial territories with a huge army. This split into two parts, the greater advancing on Constantinople, which

it besieged, the rest on Thessalonica. Although the Thessalonians seem for once to have had adequate warning of the barbarian intentions, and even have had time to send siege experts to the Byzantine strongholds of Sardica (Sofia) and Naissus (Niš), the speed of the Avar advance caught them by surprise. Many were working in the fields outside the city when the attack came, and those inside the walls were only rallied, we are told, by the heroic example of John the archbishop, who, in the absence of the civil governor, assumed the leadership of the besieged. Nor did St Demetrius fail to aid his city during this time of desperate need. An earthquake shook the city, but 'miraculously' the walls sustained no major damage. The siege lasted thirty-three days. Constantinople, also under Avar attack, was unaware of its plight, and the new governor arriving from the capital only learned the critical situation of his post when his ship entered the harbour. The *Miracula* tell that the Avar chief, enraged at failing to reduce the city, determined to burn to the ground all the churches and suburbs outside the walls. However, the city authorities, to whom he conveyed his intention, were able to dissuade him, presumably by means of advantageous counter-propositions or bribes.

The short period of peace which followed the Avar retreat was broken, we are told in the *Miracula*, by a further Greek provocation. The governor, for whom the local ecclesiastical writers of the time appear to have had little liking, perhaps a reflection of the feelings of the Thessalonians towards Constantinople generally, arrested the chief of one of the neighbouring Slav tribes on the suspicion, possibly incorrect, that he was planning an attack on Thessalonica. The local Slav tribes protested vigorously and sent emissaries to Thessalonica demanding an explanation and redress. They were welcomed by the citizens, who agreed to join in a deputation to Constantinople to ask for the Slav chief's release. It arrived at an unfortunate time. Heraclius was too busy with preparations for his expedition against the Arabs (of 634) to attend to such trivial matters as a miscarriage of justice affecting a petty barbarian chieftain. He replied that he would only release his prisoner when the Arab war was over. The Slav chief was disinclined to wait and made his escape. Full of anger against the Greeks, he returned to his people and led them and allied Slav tribes from the neighbourhood of the Strymon (Struma) against Thessalonica.

A notable feature of this — the last of the Avar-Slav sieges — was the greatly improved organisation and discipline of the Slavs. After a methodical blockade, which might well have brought about the city's capitulation had not the Thessalonians obtained supplies by sea from a friendly Slav tribe in Thessaly, they attacked fiercely and managed to breach the walls, only, the *Miracula* tell, to be foiled again by the indefatigable St Demetrius. One story of the siege is worth recounting for the many-sided insight it gives of these times. A Slav military engineer, who had learned his art from the Byzantines, was supervising the construction of a high wooden tower intended to be used in scaling the walls of Thessalonica. Suddenly, he was seized with madness. The tower remained unfinished but, as soon as the siege was raised, he recovered his sanity. The Slav engineer then entered the city to give thanks to St Demetrius in the church dedicated to the saint and was there baptised. It is certainly not surprising that St Demetrius's military prestige should have become a legend among those he defeated, as well as among those he sustained with miracles that never seemed to fail at the most critical hour of need.

The next of Macedonia's misfortunes appears to have been of Vlach origin. According to the *Miracula* a large number of Vlachs had escaped the domination of the Avars and, with the permission of the Emperor, had settled in a region not far from Thessalonica. However, their leader, Kouber, was a megalomaniac, whose dream was the imperial throne in Constantinople. His first objective was obviously Thessalonica, but to gain the city he preferred to use treachery rather than make a frontal attack. Cunning and unscrupulous as he was, his attempts, though they shook the city, ended in failure. Following this escape which, citing the authority of the Patriarch Nicephorus of Constantinople, Tafrali points out must have occurred during the final years of the reign of Heraclius, Thessalonica entered a period of comparative security. The Slav menace gradually lessened, though it did not immediately subside. The Strymon tribes again took advantage of the Empire's preoccupation with Arab wars to indulge in raids and piracy, and this state of

affairs was only ended by a bloody Byzantine victory in 657. In 668 another Byzantine army had to take the field against an uprising of the Macedonian Slavs. A crushing victory by this army was followed by the displacement of large numbers of the rebels to Asia Minor. These moves were decisive. Moreover, Thessalonica's superior civilisation, not to mention the feats of its patron saint, was establishing a growing ascendancy over the Slavs of southern Macedonia. More and more these were becoming alive to the advantages of a peaceful and settled existence.

Thessalonica had, indeed, been saved, but the Balkan lands to its north and west had been lost. Probably during the latter part of the reign of Heraclius such once powerful Balkan strongholds as Naissus, Ulpiana, Sardica, Stobi and Justiniana Prima, had gradually been evacuated. The contemporary historians gloss over the sorry and ignominious story of these losses, preferring to accent the Persian and Arab wars. Archaeology alone, through excavations which have been carried out in recent years at Caričin Grad, has revealed for us something of the last, bitter days of this Byzantine city, perhaps to be identified with Justiniana Prima.

At the end of the sixth or early in the seventh century changes appear in Caričin Grad's original spacious, well-laid plan. Houses are divided up, partitions either of brick or broken stone — in contrast to the alternate layers of the earlier walls — are thrown across rooms, indicating a later influx of inhabitants into the city. At the same time the arcades designed to line the principal streets of the city are turned into shops and workshops. Evidence of sieges appear, among them parts of catapults and the heavy stone balls that formed their ammunition. There are indications of the cutting-off of water supplies coming from outside the city. Finally, there is the material destruction, particularly as a result of conflagrations, some of which occurred during a period of Slav occupation.

Few Byzantine weapons have been discovered, possibly, although not certainly, indicating that the city was finally evacuated rather than taken by storm. Slav occupation followed on the Byzantine retreat, and Mano-Zisi, describing the results of the excavations carried out between 1949 and 1952, reports two distinct Slav building phases, one belonging to the seventh and the other to the eighth century.[1] In the first mud and wattle was the usual building material, in the second timber. Of particular interest, the more so in view of the contrast between Byzantine and Slav forms of housing, is the close similarity between Byzantine and Slav tools found in the ruins. Was this due to the long-standing influence of Roman culture, which had radiated far beyond the reach of its legions? Or was it because the Slavs had already taken to many of the more utilitarian technical accomplishments of Byzantine civilisation? The latter seems the more likely. That the Slavs were quick to learn we have the authority of contemporary Byzantine historians.

Slav occupation of Caričin Grad was short-lived and probably ended in the eighth century. The final destruction and desolation appears to have been caused by fire, aided by the Slav timber houses and disruption of the water supplies. Later on, stones were taken for building elsewhere; other destruction occurred in the course of search for loot. Gradually a wood grew over the blackened ruins and Justinian's proud foundation was forgotten. Even its situation became completely lost during the Middle Ages, though it is possible that sufficient of the ruins of its once splendid churches and those of others in the neighbourhood remained in the twelfth century to provide inspiration for the first Raška style of Serbian architecture.

Leaving desolate the crumbling remains of the ruined cities, the Slavs gradually filled the remaining depopulated expanses of the Balkans. With the lessening opportunity for plunder, the Avar interest moved elsewhere, and the Slavs, except along the Adriatic coast, where piracy proved a more profitable occupation, turned for the most part to their traditional pursuits.

As the Slav urge for plunder was replaced by the desire to settle, again the opportunity of winning over the Slavs by a policy of generosity had beckoned briefly to the Byzantines, and again it was lost. The acts of bad faith committed against the Slavs in the seventh century which the Byzantine historians have themselves recorded, and we do not know what others occurred, may have been as fatal in their consequences as Justinian's error in enlisting the Avars against the Slavs rather than the Slavs against the Avars. For

[1] G. Mano-Zisi, 'The Excavations of Caričin Grad, 1949-52'; *Starinar*, 1952-53 (Belgrade); pp. 127-68 (Serbian).

again, time was not on the Byzantine side. In the second half of the seventh century the militant Bulgars migrated south of the Danube and, with their settlement between the lower reaches of the river and the Balkan range, and their establishment of suzerainty over the neighbouring Slav tribes, any Byzantine dream of an easy and peaceful reconquest of the lost provinces was doomed. Neither the genius of SS. Cyril and Methodius, nor the diplomatic intrigues of the patriarchs of Constantinople were to be able to accomplish what energetic action based upon a true appreciation of Slav potentialities could have achieved during those two brief periods of opportunity in the sixth and seventh centuries.

b. Arch, found in the area of Galerius's Palace, to which it probably belonged. The figure in the right hand medallion is thought to be Galerius and that in the left to be the Tyche or Fortune of the city. The medallion in the centre of the soffit contains the bust of Dionysus portrayed as a woman

c. Detail of the soffit of b. Vines, interlacing in a formal pattern, rise from a vase decorated with an ivy leaf design

9 FOURTH CENTURY THESSALONICA

a. The Theodosian City Walls looking towards the circular tower of the Trigonion from the Tower of Hormisdas, named after the Persian engineer employed by Theodosius I (379–395)





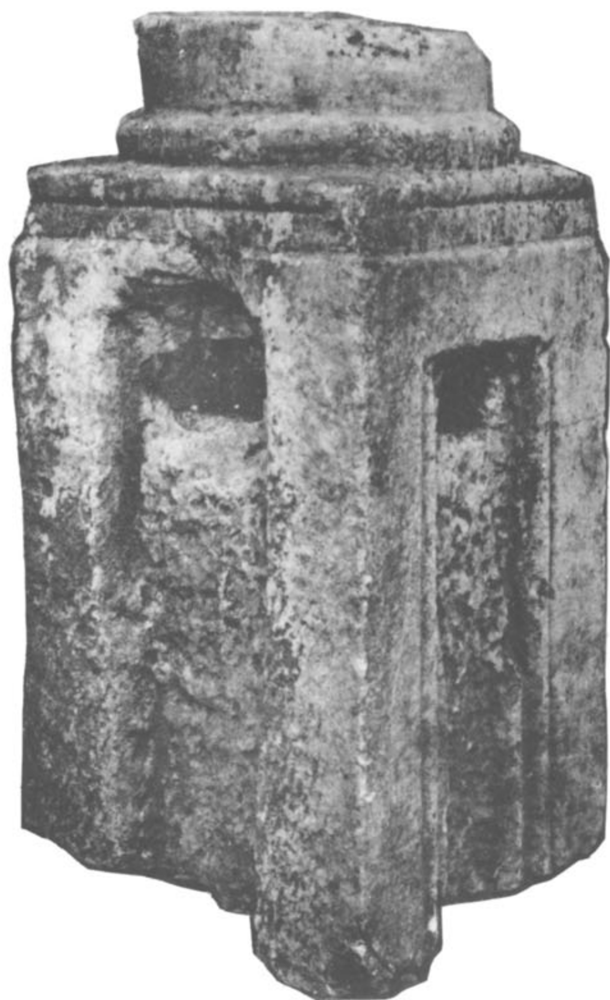


a. The excavations viewed from the narthex towards the north east corner

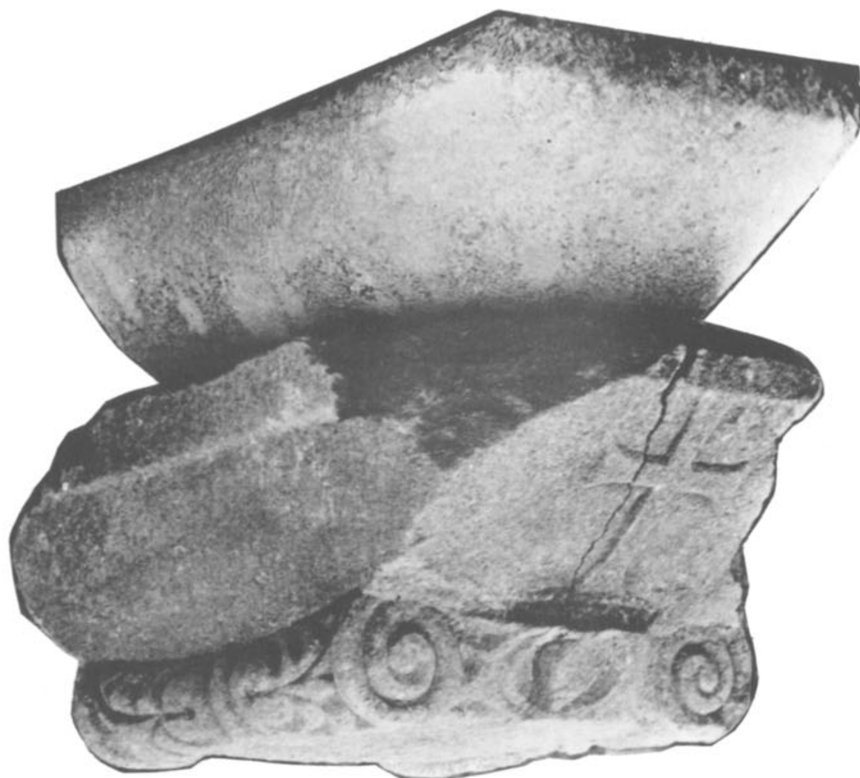
10 'EXTRA MUROS' BASILICA, PHILIPPI



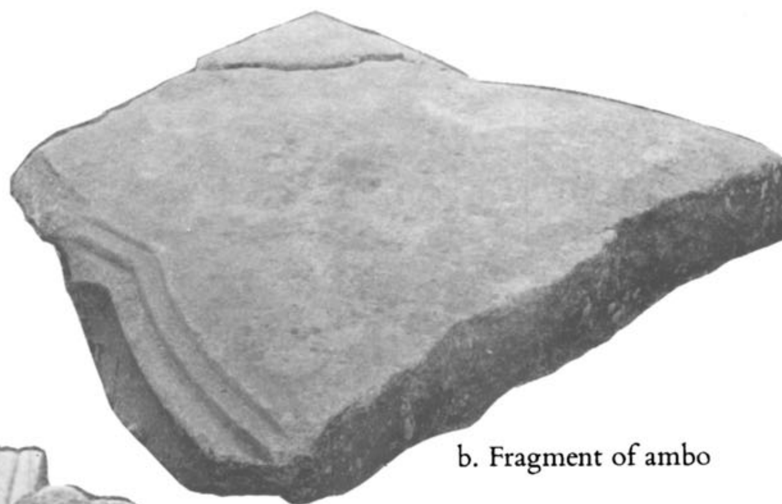
b. Fragment of chancel slab



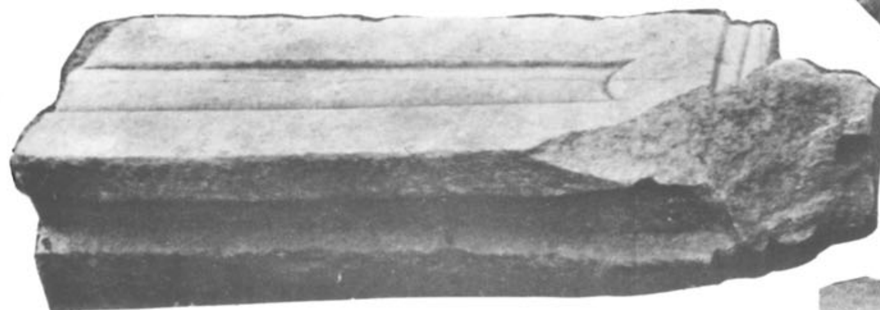
c. Fragment of pillar from chancel screen



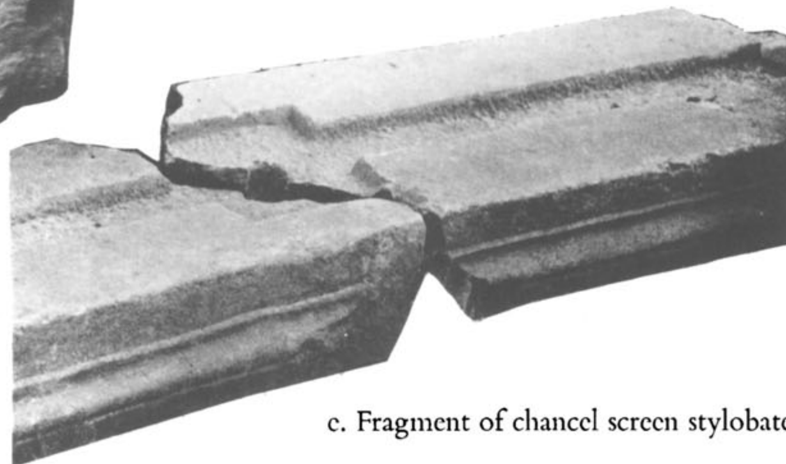
a. Capital and impost



b. Fragment of ambo



d. Fragment of pillar from chancel screen



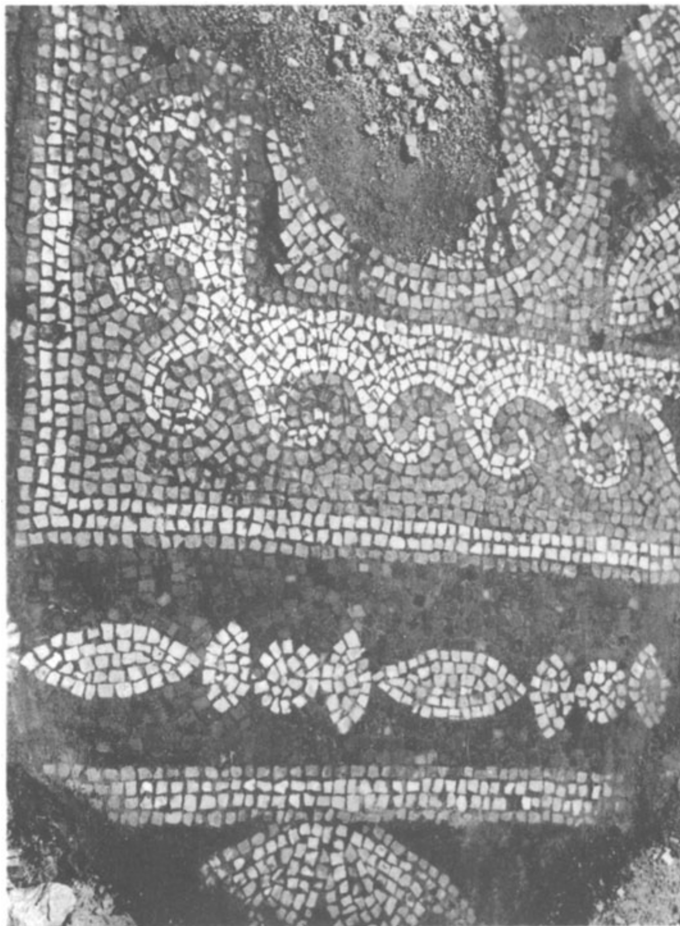
e. Fragment of chancel screen stylobate

II 'EXTRA MUROS' BASILICA, PHILIPPI



a. Floor mosaic at the south end of the narthex

12 'EXTRA MUROS' BASILICA, PHILIPPI



b. Floor mosaic at the north end of the narthex



c. Wall painting on the west wall of Crypt B

PART III

THE MONUMENTS



CONSTANTINE THE GREAT
(From a marble head found at Niš and now in the National Museum, Belgrade)

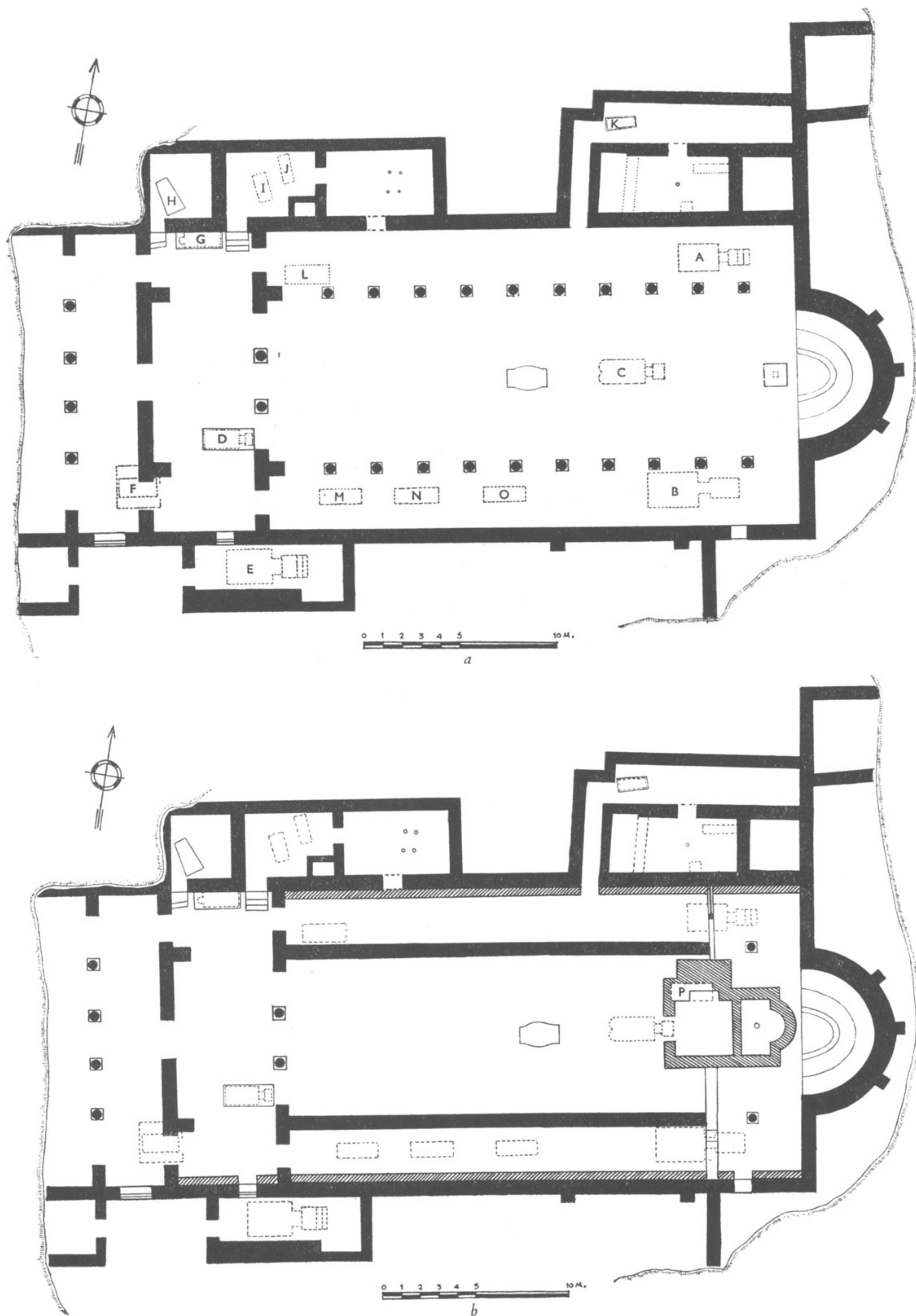


Fig. 44. 'EXTRA MUROS' BASILICA, PHILIPPI *a.* First period. Plan. *b.* Second and third periods. Plan

Chapter IX

The Monuments — I: Constantine to Justin I

(Early Fourth to Early Sixth Century)

1. THE 'EXTRA MUROS' BASILICA, PHILIPPI

(Plates II, 10–12)

It is appropriate that this survey of the Early Byzantine churches of Macedonia and the territory extending immediately to its north should start, chronologically and geographically, at Philippi, the first city in Europe to receive the Gospel of Christianity from St Paul. Here, in 1956 and 1957, on a site outside the old walls, a short distance from the Neapolis (Kavalla) gate, Pelekanides discovered and excavated a Christian basilica dating from the first half of the fourth century and probably from the reign of Constantine the Great.[1] One of the oldest churches yet excavated, prior to its discovery the existence of the 'Extra Muros' Basilica had been unsuspected, no record or indication of it appearing in any documentary source.

The Acts of the Apostles tell us that, after Paul and his companions had spent certain days in Philippi, 'on the Sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down and spake unto the women which resorted thither. And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us. . . .'[2] Collart, writing in 1937, suggested that the banks of a small river crossing the Via Egnatia two kilometres west of Philippi, which are still a popular walk for the villagers on Sundays and holidays, were the scene of this unpretentious start of Paul's mission to the Philippians.[3] However, since the draining of the marshes, which formerly covered large areas of the plain, the local topography has been considerably modified and once existent streams and rivers are now either insignificant rivulets or have been drained away altogether. The new discovery of this early church, beside a tiny stream to the east of the city, proposes an alternative to the site put forward by Collart. For it is probable that succeeding generations of Philippian Christians would have kept in sacred memory the place of the apostle's original ministry to their city and, with the Peace of the Church, would have erected a basilica in commemoration.

Three building phases were identified on the 'Extra Muros' site. The second, happening within a century or two of the first, restored the original basilica after it had been damaged by fire, but

[1] S. Pelekanides, Η ΕΞΩ ΤΩΝ ΤΕΙΧΩΝ ΠΑΛΑΙΟΧΡΙΣΤΙΑΝΙΚΗ ΒΑΣΙΛΙΚΗ ΤΩΝ ΦΙΛΙΠΠΩΝ (ΑΡΧΑΙΟΛΟΓΙΚΗ ΕΦΗΜΕΡΙΣ, 1955), (Athens, 1960).

[2] Acts xvi, 14.

[3] P. Collart, *Philippes, ville de Macédoine depuis ses origines jusqu'à la fin de l'époque romaine* (Paris, 1937), p. 457 *et seq.*

incorporated certain modifications. In the third phase, which occurred during the mediaeval period, a much smaller and simpler church was erected in the middle of the ruins of its predecessors.

The fourth-century structure was basically a Hellenistic basilica. It had a nave and two aisles, a semicircular apse, galleries, a narthex and an atrium. Porticoes lined the atrium on its north, south and east sides (all trace of the western has disappeared), and three doorways, one sited centrally and two laterally, linked it with the narthex. A tribelon connected the narthex with the nave. Two other entrances, slightly smaller than and asymmetrically placed to those from the atrium, opened into the aisles. Colonnades, without stylobates, and running the entire length of the nave except for short projections from the western wall, marked the division between the nave and aisles. They also served to support the galleries, which were approached by a staircase situated in a small room north of the narthex, to which it was linked by a door at the western end of the joint wall.

The apse, supported by three buttresses, was lit by six windows, placed one to either side of each buttress. A synthronon of three marble-lined steps, each 0·20 metres high and, from the lowest, 0·40, 0·80 and 1·00 metres deep, respectively, provided presbytery seats around the wall of the apse. No signs of an episcopal throne could be observed and Pelekanides concludes that this was probably of wooden construction. A reliquary crypt, 1·40 metres square with a small rectangular hole in its centre, was found beneath the site of the altar. No remnants of an altar were found and only a little earth in the reliquary crypt.

The internal length of the nave and aisles measured 27·50 metres, the width was 15·60 metres. This ratio of approximately 2 : 1 was usual in the Hellenistic type of Early Christian basilica. The aisles, however, were relatively narrow, 3·20 metres from the walls to the axes of the colonnades compared with a similarly calculated nave width of 9·20 metres and a depth of 5·30 metres in the narthex.

A variety of annexes were attached to the north and south walls of the basilica. One group of two rooms was placed immediately east of the room with the staircase. A doorway opened from the narthex into the more westernly of the two which, measuring 4·40 by 3·40 metres, contained a small low-walled structure in its south-east corner. Another doorway led into the second room, 5·60 by 3·40 metres, which had access to the north aisle. In the eastern half of this room the excavators found the broken remains of a marble table-top and four small, slender pillars which had been its supports.

Pelekanides identifies these two rooms as an early form of diaconicon, to which the members of the congregation, entering from the narthex, brought their offerings, perhaps depositing them in or on the low-walled structure in the corner of the first room. The table in the second room, he suggests, was where 'the priest, sitting with the archdeacon and the readers, inscribes the names of those who make oblations'.

A second group of annexed rooms was excavated at the eastern end of the basilica's north wall. An entrance from the north aisle led into an L-shaped corridor, 1 metre wide along its western length and 2 metres along its northern. A doorway in the latter opened into a rectangular room, 6·10 by 3·00 metres, paved with tiles, 0·30 metres square. A small, slender, marble pillar, originally the single leg of a small table, was found *in situ* in its centre. A second room, 2·70 by 2·80 metres, lay to the east of the first, its eastern wall flush with the termination of the north aisle. No trace of a doorway to this room was discovered, and it was not possible to ascertain its purpose.

Pelekanides points out that in spite of the unusual nature of this north-eastern annexe, its proximity to the sanctuary presupposes an important purpose probably connected with the performance of the liturgy, at least at the time of the church's foundation. The table on the single pillar, in conjunction with the position of this group of rooms, suggests, he says, a prothesis function. Here the prayers may have been recited for living and dead members of the congregation and from here the bread and wine may have been brought to the altar. Consequently, he concludes, we have in this basilica a form of pastophoria annexed to the north wall. Logical as this appears, we must admit that it is outside the normally accepted tradition of Early Christian basilicas in Greece and Macedonia. This, if it does not omit

pastophoria entirely, places them, Syrian fashion, at the basilica's east end as an integral part of a tripartite sanctuary.

Although Pelekanides confines himself in his excavation report to a factual description and interpretation of the finds, in the several comparisons which he makes between the 'Extra Muros' Basilica and the early churches of Salona he points towards an explanation of these seemingly anomalous pastophoria. A comparison of the ground plan of the 'Extra Muros' Basilica with those of the basilica of Manastirine (Fig. 21) and the Basilica Urbana (Fig. 90), both at Salona, show that all three possessed northern annexes, and that in each case one was situated with convenient access to the sanctuary. In the Basilica Urbana, the room immediately north of the apse similarly contained a short single pillar, identified by Dyggve as being the support of a prothesis table.[1]

Salona, it will be remembered, received its Christianity from the great late third and early fourth-century missionary centre of Nisibis in Northern Mesopotamia. The parochial churches of the Tur Abdin in Northern Mesopotamia, ground plans of which are shown in Figure 16, are later foundations than the 'Extra Muros' Basilica, but unquestionably they reflect the deeply rooted local tradition of 'the latitudinal chamber, although the nave is actually disposed in the contrary fashion with relation to the apse'.[2] In her description of Mar Aziziel at Kefr Zeh (Fig. 16*d*) Gertrude Bell remarks that a door in the south side of the apse 'leads into a small chamber which communicates also with the nave by a narrow door, and communicated with the narthex (along the southern side of the church) by a door now walled up. Above it is an upper chamber, approached by a wooden stair and containing an altar. Another small dark chamber with an altar lies still further to the east.'[3] Of Mar Kyriakos at Arnas (Fig. 16*a*), she comments: 'as at Kefr Zeh, a chamber containing an altar lies to the south of the apse, communicating with apse, nave and narthex'.[4] If we simply read 'prothesis table' for altar we have the essential features of the north-eastern annexes of both the 'Extra Muros' Basilica at Philippi and the Basilica Urbana of Salona.

While the Philippian and Salonitan annexes are placed against the northern walls of the churches, in these two Northern Mesopotamian examples the prothesis rooms occupy the south-east corners. Moreover, except for possible anterooms of the prothesis chambers, there appear to be no corresponding spaces for members of the congregation to bring their offerings in accordance with the diaconicon ceremony described by Pelekanides. In fact, the 'Extra Muros' Basilica with its twin annexed pastophoria conforms more to the ancient Hittite form of the Hilani narthex than do the parochial churches of the Tur Abdin. The latter are, however, somewhat later. It is possible that the churches of the third and fourth centuries possessed such pastophoria. On the other hand, perhaps they were not essential to the Mesopotamian liturgy. The placing of the prothesis on the northern side of the church — in Salona as well as Philippi — may have been due to the growing influence of Syria, which was developing as an increasingly powerful factor in Christianity during the fourth century.

In view of the powerful foothold known to have been established by Mesopotamian missionaries in Salona during the third century and maintained throughout the fourth, their presence at Philippi, an important city of a region that had long been peculiarly susceptible to Oriental influences, can hardly be surprising. In the Basilica at Tumba in Thessalonica a very similar arrangement of northern annexes was also excavated. Thus there enters a possible Mesopotamian factor into our consideration of Macedonian Christianity's early history.

On the southern side of the basilica, against the western end of the southern aisle and the narthex, to which it was connected by a doorway, another annexe, 7·75 metres long and of uneven width, was sited over a crypt. The complete structure appears to have been built to serve a single funerary purpose.

[1] E. Dyggve, *History of Salonitan Christianity* (Oslo, 1951), p. 27.

[2] G. Bell, 'Churches and Monasteries of the Tur Abdin and neighbouring districts' (*Zeitschrift für Geschichte der Architektur*), (Heidelberg, 1913), p. 84.

[3] G. Bell, 'The Churches and Monasteries of the Tur Abdin', in M. van Berchem and J. Strzygowski, *Amida* (Heidelberg, 1910), pp. 246–7.

[4] G. Bell, *op. cit.* (*Amida*), p. 249.

West of it, along the south side of the atrium, was another annexed room, three metres wide and of unknown length.

Following a fire which caused considerable damage to the upper parts of the basilica, the opportunity was taken to bring it into line with somewhat later liturgical requirements. The free standing colonnades were replaced by pillars standing upon brick stylobates. These stylobates reached a height of 0·65 metres and extended uninterruptedly from the pier projecting from the west wall of the nave to a point 4·50 metres from the east wall. Here a partition, running the full width of the basilica, converted its eastern end into an inscribed sanctuary-transept. Remains of a low screen of marble slabs supported by small pillars were discovered *in situ* in the north aisle and possibly these were part of the original partition. The building of the later small church over part of the sanctuary and a wall extending from it into the south aisle destroyed all evidence of the central and southern sections. Other additions belonging to the basilica's second period were seats along the walls of the aisles and the south wall of the narthex. These were 0·45 metres high and constructed of brick. In the north aisle the doorway into the north-eastern annexe was left, but that into the diaconicon was walled up — unless it had been done previously — and the seat continued across it. The diaconicon could now only be entered from the narthex.

The north-eastern or prothesis annexe had nevertheless lost its previously unrestricted access to the nave and sanctuary, for the new, relatively high stylobates and the eastern partition effectively blocked all passage between the nave and aisles. The annexe must, therefore, have ceased to serve a prothesis function. It seems unlikely that this was immediately transferred to one of the newly formed compartments at the eastern ends of the aisles in view of the fact that the tribelon and the narthex entrance from the diaconicon annexe remained. Thus, an Offertory Procession, starting from the diaconicon (now incorporating the functions of prothesis ?), could have approached the altar by entering the nave through the tribelon. The influence of Nisibis had disappeared — to be replaced by that of Asia Minor, perhaps associated with the Patriarchate of Antioch.

If we compare the arrangement of the rebuilt 'Extra Muros' Basilica with that of the great Basilica A (Fig. 80), erected inside the city walls in the fifth century, we find a number of important similarities. Both had the same kind of tripartite sanctuary, that is to say three divisions which, although not structurally separated, were clearly defined. Both had the nave and aisles separated by high stylobates with no intercommunicating openings. Both had a north-western annexe entered from the narthex. (In the case of Basilica A, this has hitherto been assumed, although with reservations, to have been a baptistery.[1]) Both had tribelons and a triple entrance from the atrium into the narthex. Apart from the great scale and magnificence and the T-shaped form of transept of Basilica A, the main difference between the two churches occurred in the height of their stylobates. Those of Basilica A reached 1·70 metres, the height of a man, so that no one in the aisles was permitted a glimpse of the altar. In the 'Extra Muros' Basilica only physical access was denied.

Inside the 'Extra Muros' Basilica the decoration appears to have been simple and unassuming, although skilfully and carefully executed. Only some floor mosaics and fragments of sculpture have survived in pieces large enough for study. Nothing of significance has remained from the walls of the nave and aisles which were probably decorated with wall paintings. We have no means of telling whether painting or mosaic was used to ornament the apse.

Slabs of blue schist formed the floor of the aisles but mosaic was used for the nave and narthex. Almost nothing remains of the nave floor beyond small areas discovered at the bases of the north colonnade and the northern sector of the east wall. These revealed bands with a running flower pattern and a spiralling ivy branch bearing leaves in the semicircles formed by the spirals. Of the central motif, of which these fragments formed part of the border, only minute pieces of debris could be found.

The destruction in the narthex was much less, comparatively large areas of the floor surviving in an excellent state of preservation. It was planned in

[1] P. Lemerle, *Philippes et la Macédoine orientale* (Paris, 1945), pp. 332-44.



DETAIL FROM THE MOSAIC FLOOR OF THE NARTHEX

II 'EXTRA MUROS' BASILICA, PHILIPPI

three zones to correspond with the nave and aisles. The central zone was the most damaged but sufficient of it remained to show that it comprised a series of white tetraphyllia, or four-leaved crosses, edged with blue and set in a red field. The two lateral zones were more complex and were enclosed within borders consisting of three bands — a white, blue-edged line, an 'astragalos' pattern on a red field and a blue Meander or curving wave design on a white field (Pl. 12*b*). Inside these borders series of squares enclosed individually patterned tetraphyllia alternating with circles framing various kinds of birds, dolphins and rosettes in the form of double Maltese crosses (Pls. II, 12*a*). Pelekanides draws attention to the skilful manner in which different colours and sizes of tesserae were used to avoid monotony and, in particular, to express a subtle sense of modelling in the plumage of the birds.

Unless the fire which partially destroyed the first basilica necessitated a major reconstruction in the nave, no alterations to the floor were made during the second building phase. On the other hand, some at least of the wall paintings were replaced by mosaics. Tiny pieces of plaster, to which a few tesserae have remained attached, are all that have survived of these.

Sculpture belonging to the first phase was also re-used in the second, even the bases of the pillars being re-sited on top of the new stylobates. Only one kind of capital was found, an Ionic-impost form with an ivy leaf between a leaf and scroll motif ornamenting its lower part and a Latin cross with splayed arms on the main face of the impost (Pl. 11*a*). Above these capitals had been an additional plain, abruptly inclined impost.

Part of the base and fragments of marble slabs from the ambo indicate that this possessed a double stair. As no traces of this could be observed Pelekanides concludes that it was probably constructed of wood. The surviving half of one of the marble slabs bears a relief showing a tree, under which a lamb is standing, its head turned to the rear and wearing a collar from which hangs a Latin cross. The shape of this slab indicates that it served as a balustrade of one of the stairs and, consequently, we may assume the presence of a similarly decorated slab correspondingly placed on the opposite side of the ambo, an arrangement which would leave space for a centre-piece to occupy the curved side of the platform. The evidence of Crypt B, supported by that of the capitals, leads one to think that here was a cross, but this must remain conjecture for no part of the central slab was recovered.

Other pieces of sculpture found on the site included fragments of chancel stylobates and pillars (Pl. 11*c*, *d*, *e*), part of a lintel, decorated with a cross of similar design to those on the capitals, and a marble slab displaying an encircled monogram cross composed by six ivy leaves with, to either side, Latin crosses standing on ivy stems (Pl. 10*b*). The emphasis upon the ivy leaf as a decorative motif has perhaps a special significance in view of the locality's earlier association with the Thracian goddess Bendis, to whom in her aspect of goddess of the underworld and immortality the ivy was a sacred attribute.

Sixteen funerary crypts were discovered beneath various parts of the floor. Several of these were constructed within a few decades of the church's foundation and, with a single, much later exception, all probably belong to its first phase. Five of the earliest, Crypts A–E, were vaulted, the remainder had flat ceilings.

Crypt A (Crypts A–O appear on Fig. 44*a*, Crypt P on Fig. 44*b*) lies near the eastern end of the north aisle. A marble slab set into the floor covered three steps leading to a small rectangular opening, 0·50 metres deep, through which the east end of the crypt was entered at a height near the ceiling. The crypt itself measured 2·20 by 1·40 metres and was 1·65 metres high in the centre. A Greek inscription on the face of the floor slab read, 'Sleeping place of Paul, presbyter and doctor of the Philippians. Lord Jesus Christ God, Who created out of nothing, in the Day of Judgement remember not my sins and have mercy upon me.'

Crypt B, occupying a corresponding position in the south aisle, was slightly larger, 2·65 by 1·90 metres and 1·84 metres high. A marble slab set in the floor covered a small compartment that provided access, via a short and again small, arched opening, into the eastern end of the crypt, also near the ceiling level. There were no signs of steps to this crypt. The west, north and south walls and the vaulted

ceiling were decorated with paintings of large, thickly leaved wreaths encircling Latin crosses. The cross on the west wall was the most ornate, being blue in colour and embellished with pearls and precious stones (Pl. 12*c*). Those on the north and south walls had only a pearl decoration and on the ceiling the cross was a plain white. Pelekanides comments that similar crosses have been discovered in ancient Christian graves in Thessalonica and that such wreaths appear in a Salonitan crypt. Two skeletons were found inside and an inscription on the covering slab read, 'Sleeping place of the most pious presbyters Faustinus and Donatus of the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church of the Philippians'.

The discovery of coins of Constantinus II (337–361) in the earth beneath the floor slab has particular importance in establishing the approximate date of the construction of this basilica. Together with the fact that the crypt was later than the basilica and was constructed to contain the remains of two of its presbyters, it indicates about the middle of the fourth century as the latest possible period for the foundation of the church.

Crypt C, sited on the axis of the nave, lay slightly to the west of A and B, far enough to have been beyond the sanctuary. Slightly smaller than Crypt B and possessing a similar entrance, it was distinguished by a double apse at its western end. A large number of skeletons were found inside and eighteen skulls were counted in the two apses. A Greek inscription reading, 'Sleeping place of the God-protected priests Gourasius and Constantius who died in Christ in the fourteenth indictio', points to the conclusion that it was probably a privileged funerary crypt for priests attached to the church.

Crypt D was situated in the narthex near the southern opening of the tribelon. Smaller than, but otherwise similarly planned to Crypt B, its walls were lined with carefully laid marble slabs. Another marble slab over the opening in the floor, inserted to replace the original mosaic, had carved upon it a Greek inscription reading, 'Here lies Andrew, called Comitas, the faithful *tribunus notariorum*, who was famous for his stature and beauty and much nobility was about him and he died at eighteen years on the first month day'. The exact meaning of the final phrase is unclear, but the office of *tribunus notariorum* was extremely high and Pelekanides suggests that this, coupled with the apparent youth of the deceased and the reference to much nobility, may imply a relationship with the imperial family.

Crypt E was situated in the southern annexe adjoining the narthex and the western end of the south aisle. Following the plan of Crypt A, three steps descended to a small compartment and short passage which opened into the vaulted crypt, 2·38 by 1·86 metres and 1·89 metres high in the centre. Fragmentary remains of wall paintings indicate that originally these probably covered all the walls. A few strands of gold thread were also discovered, showing that the deceased must have been laid to rest in a gold-embroidered garment. It seems likely that this whole annexe was built as a two-storied funerary chamber.

The remaining early crypts require little mention. Crypt F contained a re-used marble sarcophagus, a form of coffin most unusual in a crypt. Crypt G, at the north end of the narthex, is noteworthy for its Greek inscription which reads, 'Sleeping place of Paul, priest of God's Holy Church of the Philippians. And anyone who, after my burial, attempts to put here another dead person will be accountable to God; because this is a "monosomon" (grave for a single person) of a high priest.' Crypt H has a short Latin inscription; one other funerary inscription in Latin was also found elsewhere in the basilica. These two inscriptions are additional evidence of the basilica's foundation in the first half of the fourth century, a period which saw Greek oust Latin as the language of Philippi. A Greek inscription belonging to Crypt I referred to the deceased (as did that of Crypt H) as belonging to a 'committee'. Crypt K, in the passage of the north-eastern annexe, was notable for containing coins of Arcadius (395–408).

No evidence of a baptistery was discovered. Pelekanides comments that the practice of baptism in a running stream, as John the Baptist had baptised Christ, and Paul, presumably, had baptised Lydia and her family, probably persisted in memory if not in practice into early fourth-century Philippi. Use of a baptismal chamber had been, at least in part, a device to evade the persecution which would have

resulted from a public ceremony. Particularly if the 'Extra Muros' Basilica had been erected upon the traditional site of Paul's first conversions among the Philippians, it would have been a natural reaction immediately after the Peace of the Church to have adopted the practice of John and Paul rather than to have continued with an artificial substitute.

This absence of a baptistery is, as Pelekanides remarks, an argument in favour of a Constantinian date for the foundation of the church rather than one in the mid-fourth century. The selection of a site outside the city walls could also be adduced in support of a date preceding an official status for Christianity, but such a choice is more likely to have been the consequence of the traditional sanctity of the site, although this factor is conjecture and not an established fact. Certainly, however, the Philippian Christians who built the church were neither particularly numerous, wealthy nor influential. It was small and many of the materials were taken from earlier, pagan buildings. Such a state of affairs tallies with conditions shortly after the Peace of the Church and before 324, when Christianity was declared by Constantine to be the state religion, rather than with the middle decade of the fourth century when even the inherent strength of Philippian paganism could hardly have stood in the way of a more splendid building.

The first 'Extra Muros' Basilica appears to have lasted into the reign of Theodosius II (408–450), for coins of this emperor were found in parts which remained unreconstructed but which were covered by additions or repairs belonging to the second phase. The next evidence of a numismatical nature comes from coins of the early years of Justinian I (527–565) discovered in the new brick stylobate dividing the nave from the north aisle. The inference that the partial destruction by fire and the subsequent rebuilding occurred during the latter half of the fifth century and the first three decades of the sixth is supported by the architectural and historical evidence. More precisely, Pelekanides points out that the date of the burning was probably 473, when Theodoric Strabo unsuccessfully attacked Philippi and 'burned up what was outside the city but did no other harm'.

If this date is correct and if we may rely upon the evidence of the Justinian coins, more than half a century elapsed before the church was reconstructed, although temporary repairs possibly enabled it to continue in use in so far as the general state of insecurity permitted. Probably the reconstruction was an early result of Justinian's firm measures to defend the Balkans against the Slav, Avar and Bulgar invaders. This view is supported by the fact that the second phase reflects none of the new ideas gaining strength in Constantinople, although these were to appear in a tentative manner soon afterwards at Philippi in Basilica B. On the contrary, it followed with striking fidelity the lines of Basilica A, probably erected a little less than a century before and, we surmise, destroyed by the earthquake of 518. It is, however, interesting to note that Basilica B (Fig. 97), probably started shortly before the middle of the sixth century and perhaps intended as the successor of Basilica A, also retained the principle of an inscribed eastern transept by making the stylobates and colonnades of the nave turn outwards before reaching the east wall of the basilica.

The next and last piece of numismatical evidence is a coin of Leo VI (886–912). It was found in Crypt P, a grave that extended beneath the sanctuary (Fig. 44*b*). This situation and the fact that its walls were built of broken pieces taken from the main building, including the threshold, jambs and lintels of what had probably been the main doorway, show clearly that by the end of the ninth or the beginning of the tenth century the basilica no longer existed. Which of the many Slav, Avar and Bulgar raids and invasions of the sixth, seventh and eighth centuries was responsible for the final destruction is impossible to say with certainty, but Pelekanides argues convincingly for the second of the two Bulgar invasions of the first half of the ninth century, when, in 812 and 837, they occupied Philippi. The siting of a grave so that it impinged upon the area of the bema suggests that several decades at least must have elapsed since the church's destruction, long enough for the ruins to have lost the distinctive character of their various divisions, but before the traditional sanctity and associations of the site had become dim. A Bulgar inscription of 837 found among the ruins

of Basilica B (see p. 193) certainly provides a degree of circumstantial support for this view.

The third and final phase of the 'Extra Muros' Basilica was a small single-naved church with a rounded, protruding apse (Fig. 44*b*). It was situated in the bema of the old basilica and the line of its north wall required considerable modification because of Crypt P which lay beneath. The walls were built from various parts of the earlier building, including pillars, bases, capitals, stylobates and marble slabs. A small pillar served as the base of the altar. Built presumably when security, although neither prosperity nor fame, had returned to Philippi, it maintained pathetically and humbly the proud apostolic tradition of the site — until the period of Turkish domination, when the region became inhabited by a solely Moslem population, and the church and the local Christian traditions passed into oblivion.

2. THE 'AGORA' BASILICA, THASOS (Pl. 13)

Remains of a small early-Christian basilica were discovered in 1949 in the north-east part of the agora of the ancient city of Thasos, on the island of the same name. This church probably dates back to some time during the fourth century, although between its foundation and the end of the seventh century it underwent considerable changes.[1]

The structural elements of the original basilica consisted of a nave, approximately 13 metres long and 6·65 metres wide; two aisles, each 2·70 metres wide; a narthex, 3·50 metres deep; and a semicircular apse that was 5·70 metres in diameter. The full length, including the exterior walls, was about 21 metres. The excavators have shown that one of the post-fourth-century alterations was the raising of the level of the floor. This fact needs to be remembered when viewing the ruins to-day, since both early and later stages exist side by side.

[1] *Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique*, lxxv (Paris, 1951), pp. 154–64; X. I. Macaronas, Archæological Reports, ΜΑΚΕΔΟΝΙΚΑ (1941–52), vol. 2 (Thessalonica, 1953), pp. 667–8 (Greek).

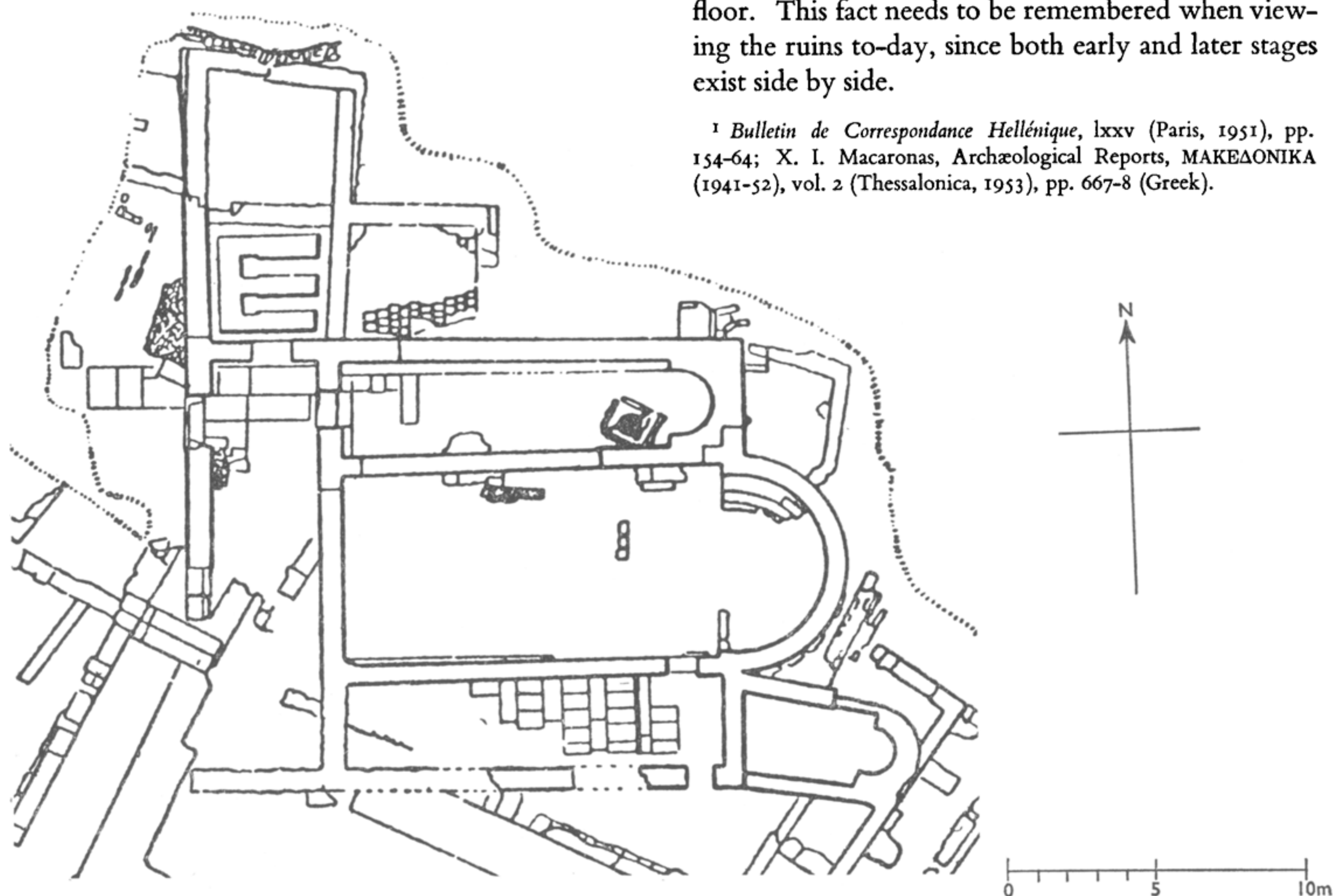


Fig. 45. 'AGORA' BASILICA, THASOS. PLAN

The fourth-century church was paved with white marble slabs, apparently taken from nearby buildings, which seem to have been the principal source of building materials. Columns, about 2·10 metres or so high, on bases, stood on stylobates of stone or rubble, which were 0·45 metres high. These stylobates ended 0·65 metres from the east wall to allow access between the aisles and the nave. The bases of the pillars, two discs on a rectangular slab, were grooved as if to carry parapet slabs. A bench of rubble covered with plaster ran along the north wall of the north aisle and at its west end on either side of the doorway into the narthex.

The north aisle also had a door at its eastern end, and close to this, a large well. The south aisle had a door at the eastern end of its outer wall. The western entrances into the church from the outside were complicated by the presence of earlier buildings. Besides a doorway at the north end of the narthex, another was placed at the northern end of the west wall. This was slightly wider than that leading from the narthex into the north aisle (1·25 and 1·05 metres respectively) and was situated asymmetrically opposite it. A second western entrance into the narthex occupied a position a little to the south of the church's axis. Beyond this another building obstructed convenient access.

Nothing remains of whatever entrance led from the narthex into the nave, nor from the narthex into the south aisle.

Three concentric steps, forming presbytery seats, back on to the semicircular wall of the apse. Only those in the northern part exist to-day, the others were probably destroyed about the end of the last century when a well was dug there. To the west these seats end in huge stone slabs taken from some old building, possibly an indication that the sanctuary did not extend into the nave. No traces of a chancel screen have been found in this part of the church. A silver reliquary is said to have been discovered and surreptitiously removed during the sinking of the well, but a search for the reliquary crypt which would have contained it yielded no results.

Half-way along the nave, near the northern stylobate, a tomb containing the skeleton of a man had been inserted below the surface of the floor and covered with five irregularly shaped marble slabs. While probably later than the original building, it is clear that this tomb belonged to an early phase of the church when the floor was at its lower level.

Also constructed at some date subsequent to the foundation of the church was an E-shaped hypogeum or crypt outside the north door of the narthex. The three sections of this triple crypt are each two metres long and 0·81 metres wide. The walls of marble and gneiss blocks are covered with greyish-brown plaster, on which appear jewelled Latin crosses with small round pendants at the ends of each horizontal arm. On the cross at the head of the central compartment was an inscription in black paint reading: 'ΑΚΑΚΙΟΥ ΜΑΡΤΥΡΟΣ' — 'Akakios Martyr'.

The crypt was covered by marble slabs, apparently either taken from the chancel screen or from the parapets of the nave colonnades. They are solid pieces; one is ornamented with a Greek cross inscribed in a circle. Above these slabs the whole area covering the crypt was decorated with a rough mosaic consisting mostly of large white marble pebbles, but with a border of ivy leaves formed by pieces of blue slate.

Two rectangular enclosures, one to the east and one to the north, opened on to this mosaic floor. Other rooms appear to have existed to the west of the crypt.

Inside the narthex, on the red cement floor near the north door, a basket or sack was outlined with small white pebbles against a background of diamond-shaped lozenges with single pebbles in their centres. With this was an inscription reading: 'ΥΠΕΡ ΕΥΧΗΣ ΑΚΑΚΙΟΥ' — 'for the prayer of Akakios'.

The excavators point out that the style of the mosaic and the form of the letters of the inscription, as well as the type of jewelled crosses painted on the walls of the crypt, indicate a fifth-century date for the martyrium. The fact that this structure was later than the church is, therefore, a strong argument in favour of the latter's fourth-century foundation. This dating is also supported by the evidence of the slabs. It is tempting, although not certain, the excavators add, to see this church as the one mentioned by Gregory of Nazianius, in connection with which a Thasian priest was entrusted with a mission to Constantinople in

order to buy marble slabs from the Proconnesus quarries, a mission for which, alas, he proved unworthy, spending the money in the capital on other, unspecified purposes.

Probably towards the end of the sixth century, perhaps at the same time as the raising of the floor, a prothesis chamber was constructed in the north aisle by blocking the east door and building in its place an inscribed apse. A diaconicon chamber, with a protruding semicircular apse, was built as a slanting projection from the east end of the south aisle. The new floor reached to the top of the stylobates and the presbytery seats, thus obliterating both these early features.

Whether Akakios was a local martyr or whether the martyrium held relics brought from another centre, remains an unsolved mystery. The name was not uncommon, but no known text mentions an Akakios who died for this faith in Thasos. Of those with this name who were martyred elsewhere, the excavators incline towards a Cappadocian soldier who was beheaded in Constantinople in 303. His cult was the most popular of all the saints bearing this name. Moreover, in the Synaxary of Constantinople is a mention of the relics of three saints — one a woman, one called Markos (possibly a mistake for Akakios ?) and one neither described nor named — being transported from Constantinople to Thasos, an incident which could provide a likely explanation for the triple form of the martyrium.

3. THE ROTUNDA OF ST GEORGE, THESSALONICA (Pls. III, 14–24)

The Rotunda of St George, Thessalonica, was built by Galerius (died 311), and may have been intended by him to be his mausoleum. It was converted into a Christian church during the reign of Theodosius the Great (379–95),[1] that is to say, coincident with the important resurgence of Christianity in Thessalonica which had followed Theodosius's conversion by Acholius and the subsequent imperial decree establishing Christianity, Orthodox Christianity specifically, as the only legally tolerated religion within the Empire.

Doubt has been expressed as to whether the church was originally named after St George. The sources are silent on the point, but in early Byzantine times the episcopal church of Thessalonica was reputed to be a large building, dedicated to the Holy Archangels or Asomati, in the same quarter of the city. No indication, however, has been noted near St George of an annexed baptistery, which would have been essential to the official church of a bishop. On the other hand, the newly discovered Palace Octagon Church possesses this very feature. Unlike St Demetrius, whose cult was already established, St George was unconnected with the city. However, although the latter's prominent place in Western hagiography was only achieved after many centuries, he is shown on a fifth- or sixth-century icon of Sinai with the Virgin and Child and St Theodore. Thessalonica's close association with Syria and Egypt in the fourth century may well have resulted in the dedication of the Rotunda to this eastern saint, although recently a new theory has been propounded that it was originally dedicated to Christ under the name 'Dynamis Theos'.[2]

Sometime after the capture of Thessalonica by the Turks — between 1430 and the end of the sixteenth century — the Rotunda was transformed into a mosque. It is now a museum for Christian antiquities.

A considerable effort of the imagination is required to-day to visualise Galerius's building in its original, early fourth-century setting. From its southern portico, a colonnaded avenue led to the emperor's great Triumphal Arch, beneath which it intersected one of the city's main streets and then continued south between the Hippodrome to its east and Galerius's palace to its west. During the Theodosian alterations the confines of the Rotunda appear to have been enlarged and the church made the centre-piece of a great complex of ecclesiastical buildings (Fig. 46*b*).

It is difficult to say whether Galerius's Rotunda was

[1] H. Torp, 'Quelques Remarques sur les mosaïques de l'église Saint-Georges à Thessalonique', *Acts of the IXth International Byzantine Congress, Thessalonica, 1953* (Athens, 1955), vol. i, pp. 489–98.

[2] A. M. Amman, 'Le Titre primitif de l'église de Saint-George à Salonique', *Acts of the Xth International Byzantine Congress, Istanbul, 1955* (Istanbul, 1957).

inspired by Roman models, such as the Pantheon in Rome and Diocletian's mausoleum in Split, or by buildings encountered during his eastern campaigns in lands where circular structures had long been the appropriate and sacred form for temples and mausolea. Most probably East and West jointly and indivisibly contributed. In its building methods, however, the Rotunda is unquestionably Oriental. Instead of using concrete, as had been the practice in Rome for the past two and a half centuries, particularly for vaulting, the architect relied upon principles of Asiatic origin which had only appeared in the eastern Mediterranean during the second and third centuries A.D.

Fundamentally, the building's plan is of extreme simplicity, a cylinder supporting a semicircular dome. The walls, 6·3 metres thick as far as the base of the dome, are pierced by eight bays. Brick is the material of construction throughout — for the thin dome, for the barrel-vaulting of the bays, and for the walls, which are filled with mortared rubblework bound with brick courses. The outside walls are continued, though considerably thinner, above the base of the dome to support the beams and rafters of the low pitched roof protecting the light and comparatively fragile dome. A protective timber roof over a vault was to become a common feature of Western mediaeval church architecture, but Galerius's Rotunda and, later in the same century, the mausoleum of Sta Costanza in Rome, are two of the earliest known European examples of the practice.

During the conversion of the Rotunda into a church one important and permanent structural addition was made, the eastern bay being extended to form an oblong, apsidal-ended sanctuary. A second addition, since dismantled, was an ambulatory encircling the outside of the church and opening into each of the remaining seven bays. At the same time, the great dome, the ceilings of the bays and the apse were richly decorated with mosaics.

Excavations have also revealed that the church once possessed a towered portico at the south entrance, but it is uncertain whether this was part of Galerius's original structure. If so, it would have provided another parallel with the Pantheon in Rome. The portico opened upon the colonnaded road leading towards the Triumphal Arch. Discussing the church's entrances, Tafrali writes:

> The monument was entered from two sides, the west and the south. In front of the doors were porches of later date than the building, porches which still existed in the tenth century. But once there must have been a third entrance on the north side, corresponding

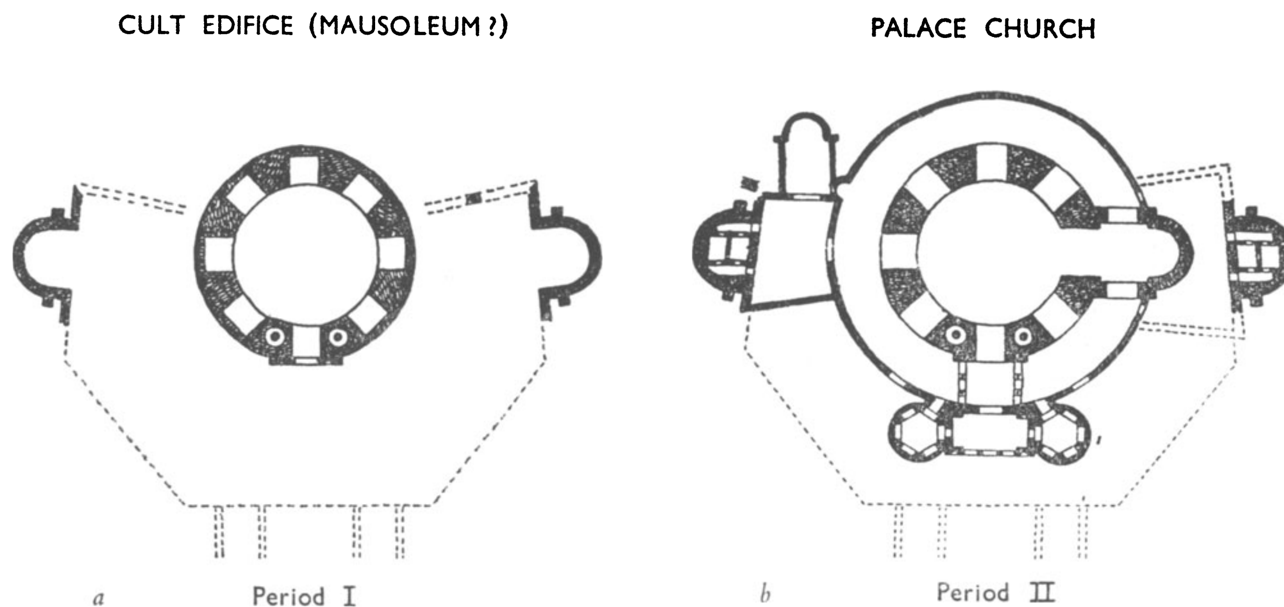
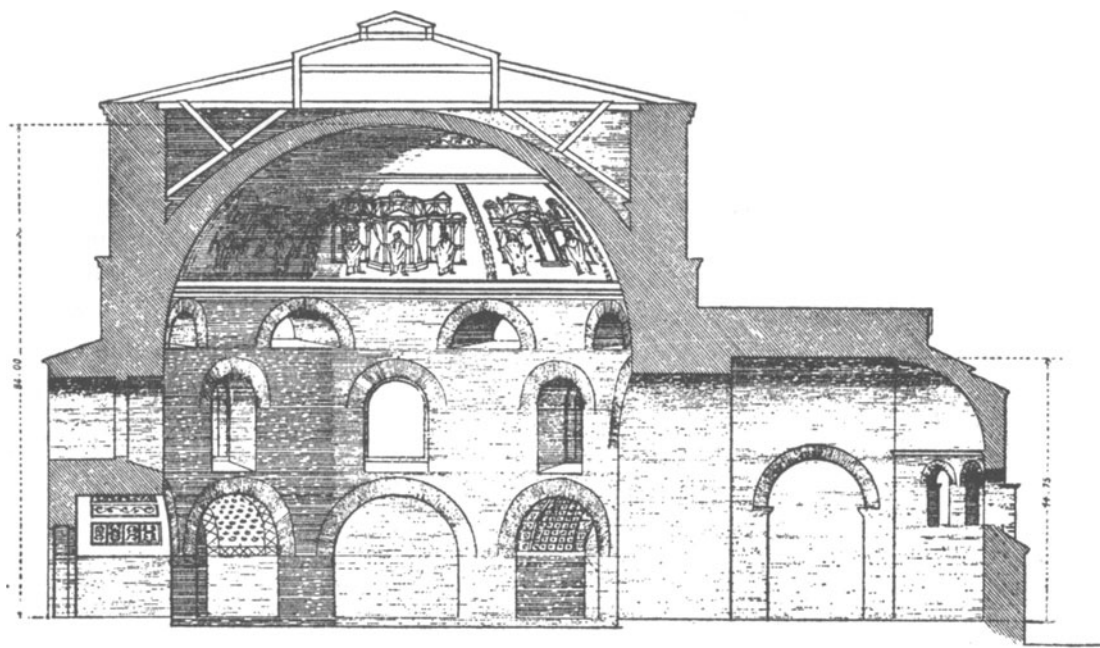


Fig. 46. ROTUNDA OF ST GEORGE, THESSALONICA
a. Plan of Galerius's building. *b.* Plan of Theodosian Palace Church.
(Reconstruction by Dyggve)



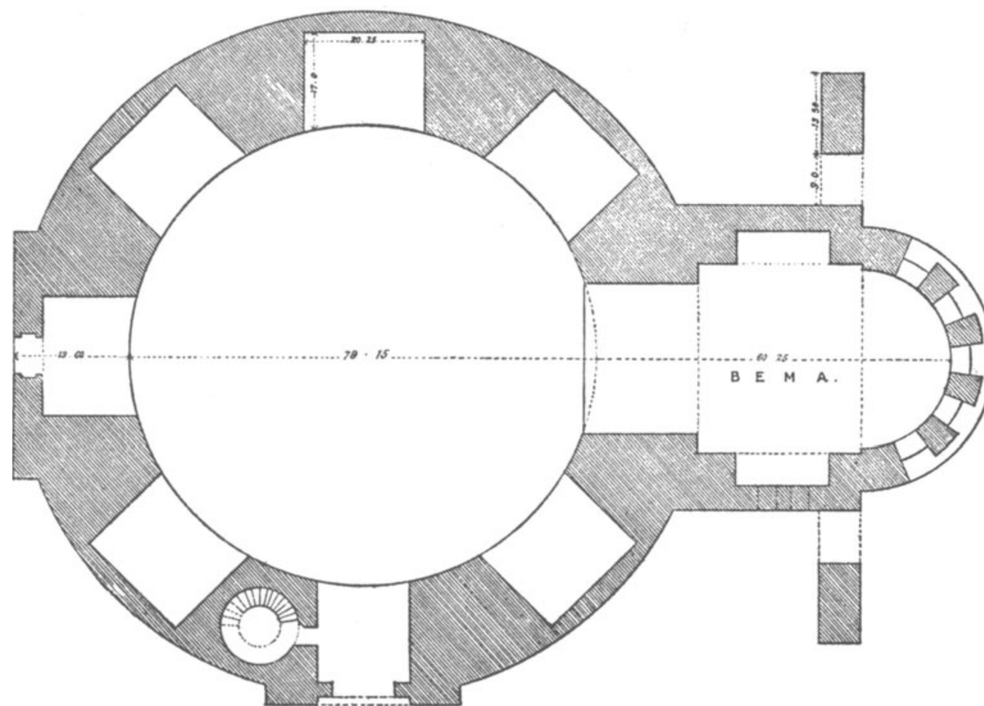


Fig. 47. ROTUNDA OF ST GEORGE, THESSALONICA. SECTION AND PLAN OF PRESENT STRUCTURE

to that on the south, and which was later blocked up. By means of their porches, these three entrances and the bema which similarly protruded from the building's circumference, formed the four branches of a cross ; their disposition proves the intention of the restorer to give the building . . . the form of a cross. In front of the church is the fountain surrounded by several columns of green stone from Thessaly. In the open space before the church one still saw in the eighteenth century an underground chamber, the purpose of which we are ignorant and which has since completely disappeared.[1]

Impressive now, in its original state, the mosaic decoration of the dome, the vaulted bays and the apse must have presented a profoundly stirring sight to the Christian worshipper; and the Thessalonians were a people whose religious emotions were not difficult to arouse. The vaulted ceilings of the bays, extending almost the full depth of the walls, were richly ornamented with mosaics showing birds and fruit and geometric designs. The decoration of the dome, estimated by Texier and Pullan [2] to have used more than thirty-six million tesserae, comprised three zones, the middle one now almost entirely missing.

The lowest zone consisted of eight panels, regularly spaced on the sixty-five and a half metre circumference of the base of the dome. Seven have wholly or partially survived, the missing panel being situated above the opening leading to the apse. These seven remaining mosaics are among the greatest extant examples of early Byzantine art. Each presents two or sometimes three saints, chosen with regard to the calendar — the months of their festival being given with the saint's name and description — as well as for their qualities of intercession. They stand, their hands raised in the position of prayer, in front of sumptuously embellished architectural compositions, of which there are four versions, each appearing twice. These compositions rise behind the saints in a manner reminiscent of the ornate and formal architectural backgrounds or *scenae frons* of Hellenistic and Roman theatres. Each panel is separated from the next by a stylised representation of the Tree of Life.

[1] O. Tafrali, *Topographie de Thessalonique* (Paris, 1913), p. 158 (trans.).

[2] C. Texier and R. P. Pullan, *Byzantine Architecture* (London, 1864), p. 137.

Traces of sandalled feet are all that remain of the middle zone to indicate that here were probably to be seen the apostles. In the apex of the dome, encircled in a wreath of foliage and fruits held by four archangels, was the figure of Christ. Unfortunately, nothing has survived of the mosaics in the apse, and our knowledge of them is limited to Colonel Leake's tantalising comment that the Turks had not destroyed 'a figure of the Almighty, which occupied a niche opposite to the door',[3] and even this may have referred to a wall painting of much later date which restoration work has recently uncovered.

To appreciate the meaning and the intended effect of the surviving panels and the decorative patterns of the bays we must regard them, to the best of our ability, through the fervent, more or less unsophisticated eyes of a fourth- or fifth-century Thessalonian Christian, as well as in relation to their architectural position and to those parts which have since been lost. The ambulatory, now destroyed, encircled the outside of the building and opened into each of the barrel-vaulted bays. As worshippers entered the church, they passed from the ambulatory into the great round nave through the bays. Here their eyes would immediately have been drawn upwards to admire the luxuriant, geometric tracery and the richly ornamental representations of birds and fruit, reminders of God's bounty and wonders on earth and many, if not all of them, possessing some religious symbolism. The bays, therefore, had an extremely important function. They were passages in which Christians living in the terrestrial world were prepared for the sight of the great vault of heaven represented by the dome. In Rome the ambulatory mosaics of Sta Costanza (*circa* 340) may have served a similar purpose and, in any case, a comparison of these two examples of fourth-century ecclesiastical art is of particular interest. The mosaics of Sta Costanza are pagan in spirit as well as in form. They are related, not to the humble Christian art of the catacombs, but to the decorative motifs that had been used upon the walls and floors of the imperial Roman palaces. The ceilings of the bays in St George are also imperial art, and in both form and subject they demonstrate a clear relationship to those of Sta Costanza. In

[3] W. M. Leake, *Travels in Northern Greece* (London, 1835), vol. iii, p. 240.

spirit, however, they belong to an entirely different world, where paganism has been replaced by Christianity and the cool, clear marbles of Rome by the rich colour and ornate splendour of the East.

Reaching the central domed space, or nave, their eyes already uplifted by the ceilings of the bays, the Christian worshippers in St George saw first the martyr saints, whose martyrdom for their faith was, in several cases, so recent as to be only just beyond the memories of living men. Depicted in the act of intercession for the congregation below, these stood in front of the iridescent portals of heaven. Above them, in 'vertical perspective', were (we presume) the apostles, the chosen disciples among men of the Son of God. Finally, reigning above all Heaven and Earth, was the crowning glory of Christ Himself.

This was not the whole. We can neither, for instance, reconstruct in our minds the decoration of the apse nor sense the impact of the church's architectural environment. Nor can we recreate the triumphant fervour of fourth-century Christianity. Even so, in the Rotunda that has been pagan temple, church, mosque, and which is now a museum, it is still not difficult to feel some lingering remnant of the awe that must then have overtaken Christian Thessalonians when they entered it to worship.

Before considering the significance of the architectural compositions in the dome we shall take the individual figures of the martyr saints represented in the foregrounds. In so doing, it is essential always to have in mind the splendour and exuberance of the whole scene; the golden background, against which golden pillars, arches, friezes and cupolas gleam and sparkle with the light of many coloured jewels; rich curtains and the bright plumage of birds adding further exotic touches. It is Oriental rather than Occidental splendour, and, yet, with all the magnificence, there is a restraint which indicates an Orient that has felt the influence of Hellenism.

The Martyr Saints in the Dome of St George

The figures all stand in a frontal and 'orante', or praying, position. None have haloes. Beside them are written their names, their professions, usually soldier or priest, but with exceptions, such as Damian, who is described as a doctor, and Philemon, as a flute player, and the months of their festivals. Following the panels clockwise from the lost panel over the opening to the apse, the saints are:

1. An unknown saint who occupied a part of the mosaic that is now completely destroyed.

   Leo, wearing a chlamys, was a leading citizen of Patara in Lycia. He was martyred in the reign of Diocletian for preaching Christianity and persistently refused to sacrifice to idols even under long and extreme torture.

   Philemon, wearing a phelonion, was a flute player of Comana who, when ordered to play his instrument before idols, publicly declared himself a Christian and prayed that his flute might be destroyed lest it be used for idolatrous purposes. Legend tells us that his prayer was answered. Flames descended from the sky and consumed his flute, and afterwards he died a martyr.
2. Onesiphoros, in a chlamys, and Porphyrios, in a phelonion, were martyred together. The former was a powerfully connected citizen of Iconium (Konia) where he received St Paul, and was baptised by him with all his household. He left Iconium to preach Christianity at Paros, where, with his servant Porphyrios, he was seized and tortured to death.
3. Damian and his friend Cosmas (whose inscription is now lost) both wearing the phelonion, were two natives of Arabia, usually jointly described as the 'Anargyriou', or silverless ones. They travelled about the country curing the sick without charge, only asking that those they healed should embrace Christianity. Enemies denounced them as magicians to the Emperor Carinus. Arrested, they were ordered to renounce Christianity. The two refused, but managed to convince the emperor of their righteousness by curing him of an illness, whereupon the emperor, too, believed. Their pagan opponents, jealous of the honours they received, attacked and killed the two one day while they were gathering herbs on a mountainside.
4. An unknown saint wearing a chlamys, the inscription beside him has been entirely lost.

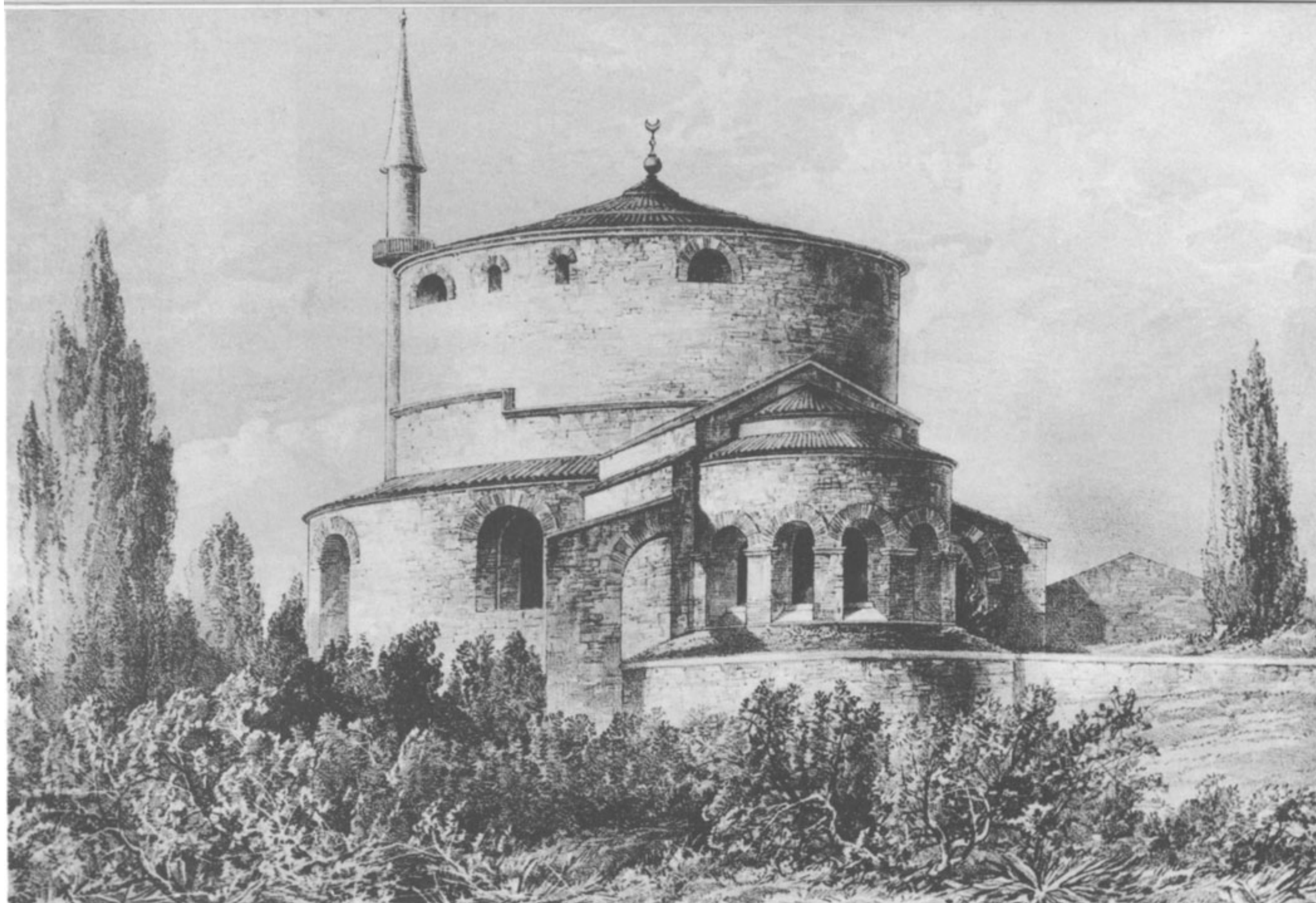
   Romanos (only his forearm and inscription now remaining), a deacon at Caesarea in Palestine, was a native of Antioch, where, during a visit in the reign of Diocletian, he comforted a group of Christians who had been sentenced to torture, and rebuked their judge. For this he was thrown into prison and strangled.



a. The excavations looking north west from the apse, showing the doorways at the north end of the narthex



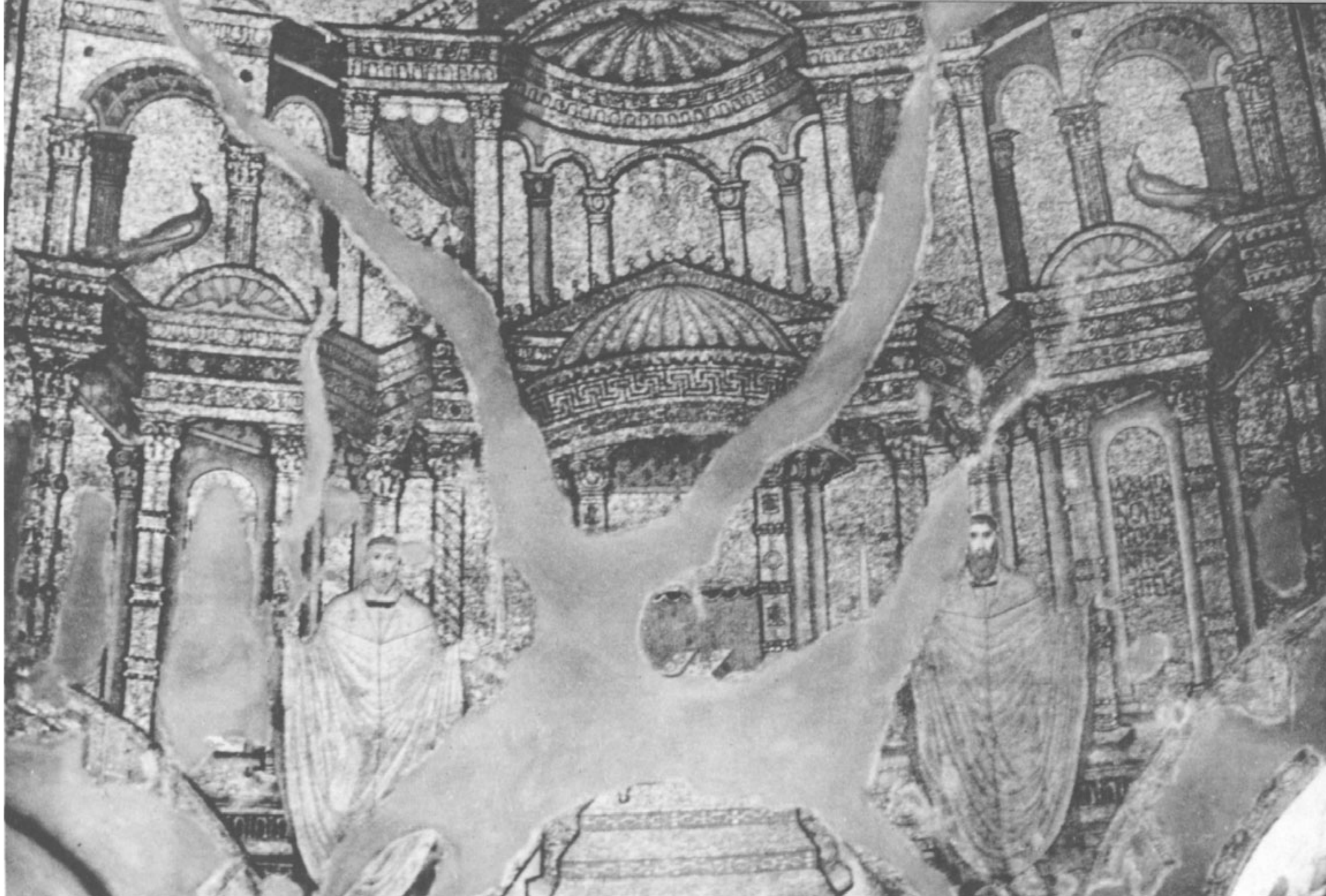
b. The apse. To the left of the photograph are the remains of the presbytery seats lining the wall of the apse



a. Rotunda of St George from the east, 1864. (Drawing by C. Texier)



b. Dome Mosaic Panel No. 4; an unknown saint, Romanos (figure missing) and Eucarpion



a. Dome Mosaic Panel No. 3; Cosmas and Damian

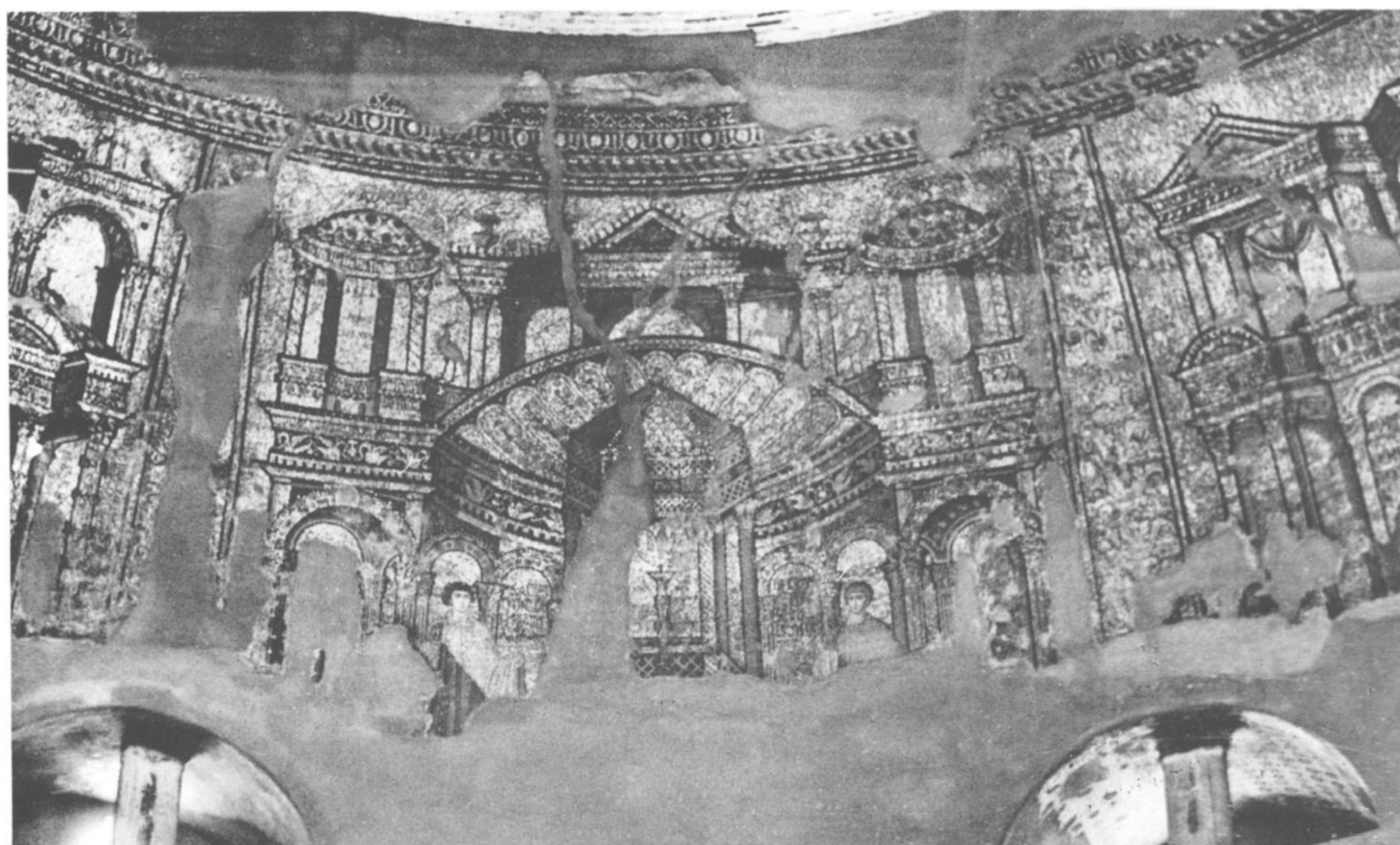
15 ROTUNDA OF ST GEORGE, THESSALONICA

b. Dome Mosaic Panel No. 5; an unknown saint and Ananias

a. Dome Mosaic Panel No. 2; Onisiphoros and Porphyrios

16 ROTUNDA OF ST GEORGE, THESSALONICA

b. Dome Mosaic Panel No. 6; Basiliscos and Priscos



Eucarpios, in a chlamys and described as a soldier, was martyred at Nicomedia, also in the reign of Diocletian.

5. The inscription regarding the first saint, who wears a phelonion, in this panel has been lost. The second, Ananias, also in a phelonion, was a Christian priest, who, during the Diocletian persecution, displayed such fortitude under torture that his warder begged to be baptised. Both were then bound to a wheel and placed upon a burning grate. The fire at once extinguished itself, and the seven soldiers responsible for the torture were inspired to accept Christianity. All nine were ultimately put to death.
6. Basiliscos, wearing a chlamys, was a native of the kingdom of Pontus and a soldier in the Tryonian legion. With two fellow Christians he was arrested during the Diocletian persecution and executed after a period of torture for refusing to sacrifice to Apollo.

   Priscos, another soldier, also in a chlamys, was a Roman officer in the guard of the Emperor Aurelian. While serving in Gaul he was arrested, with many of his companions, for refusing to worship idols, and was martyred.
7. Philip, dressed in a phelonion, was bishop of Heraclea in Thrace at the beginning of the fourth century. When his church was ordered to be closed and its treasure seized, he persisted in holding services in its portico and in rallying Christians to their Faith. For this he was burnt at the stake.

   The history of Therinos is obscure. He is classified as a soldier and wears a chlamys. Only parts remain of the third saint in this panel and the inscription is also mostly obliterated. Earlier photographs, however, indicate him to be Cyril. He wears a phelonion and may have been a Palestinian deacon martyred in the persecutions of the early fourth century.

The bodies and draperies of the saints are well executed, but the heads are outstanding work by one or more highly talented artists. Accomplished in much smaller tesserae than the costumes and the architecture, the faces are modelled with extreme delicacy and without the use of dark, heavy contours to delineate the features. Considerable variety is displayed. Some, Onesiphoros and Porphyrios, in particular, have close similarities with such works as the statue of the Good Shepherd from Palmyra (now in Berlin). Others, such as Ananias and his anonymous companion, have links with the school that produced the fifth-century sculptured head (Pl. *22l*) found at Ephesus. More than one have resemblances with the work of the Fayum painters. For all their individuality, however, all possess a transcendental and hieratic quality. They are saints who, by virtue of their supreme sacrifice, have achieved the Heavenly and ineffable Peace of God. They are, in fact, prototypes of the long series of saints and fathers of the Church that have represented the idealism of Byzantine Christianity on the walls of churches from the fourth century until the present day. The iconographic break with the past which these figures represent is shown by a comparison with the fourth- and fifth-century mosaics of the Roman churches of Sta Costanza and of Sta Maria Maggiore. In fact, Sta Maria Maggiore's cycles of crowded Biblical scenes are not unlike in technique and are similar in educational purpose to the scenes on Thessalonica's Arch of Galerius.

The Architectural Compositions in the Dome of St George

Two-storied, architectural compositions rise behind the martyr saints in each of the seven remaining panels of the lowest zone of the dome. Together with the lost panel, they give an effect of an octagon. There are four different architectural versions, the northern being repeated by the southern, and the western, presumably, by the now lost eastern panel. The repetition of the north-eastern, however, does not appear in the diagonally opposite position, but in the south-east, and, correspondingly, the north-west in the south-west. Each panel is separated from the next by a foliage and vase arrangement symbolising the tree of life in a highly stylised manner. While not identical, each of these follows a closely similar pattern.

Before discussing the variations in these architectural compositions it will be useful to take the features that are common to all. Most prominent, perhaps, is the glowing, golden nature of both the architecture and the background. This golden effect is intensified by the brilliant colours of the martyrs' clothes, of rich curtains, and of the splendid plumage of peacocks and other birds, as well as by the fact that the architectural compositions are shallow façades, consisting for the most part of pillars and arcades,

through which the golden background is constantly revealed.

Yet, shallow as these architecturescapes are, they are far from appearing insubstantial. Well-proportioned marble pillars support massive entablatures. They are façades only in the sense that a city or palace gate is a façade — for the city or palace that is within.

In each case the central architectural feature is an apse, exedra or opening, flanked by one or two pavilions on either side. An upper storey consisting of a central superstructure and two subsidiary loggias produces the impression of an ornate, and even fantastic, towered façade. An often inaccurate use of perspective achieves a limited sense of depth, not unlike that of a relief carving. The rendering of architectural components also frequently appears careless. Symmetrical arrangement and an effect of exuberant splendour, rather than realism and exactitude, are the artist's aim.

In three of the pairs of panels a round, rectangular or hexagonal ciborium stands in the centre foreground. The exception occurs in the panel opposite the apse; here a low chancel screen takes its place.

Panels 1 and 7 (Pl. 17)

An unknown saint (now wholly lost), Leo and Philemon stand in the foreground of Panel 1; Philip, Therinos and Cyril in the foreground of Panel 7.

These two panels, the most classical of all, flank the missing composition above the apse. The central structure of the lower storey is an apparently unroofed exedra. In front of it, or projecting from it, is a rectangular ciborium with a triangular pediment above the entablature, which is common to the ciborium, the exedra and a pavilion on either side. A round, jewelled candlebra hangs from the centre of the ciborium and in the tympanum two winged angels hold a round shield or clipeus bearing the head and shoulders of Christ. Between the ciborium and the adjoining pavilions the exedra reveals an arcade with turquoise-coloured curtains drawn back around the inner pillars to display lamps hanging behind. These two pavilions, which are surmounted by bow-shaped pediments, are each flanked by another pavilion, the entablature of which is slightly different, and which has a semicircular pediment and a scalloped tympanum.

The foreground pillars of the ciborium and the outer pavilions carry jewelled bands. The remainder are plain. The capitals are all Corinthian, but with a tendency towards a Composite effect.

Above the ciborium in the centre of the upper storey is a circular, domed loggia supported by four pillars. Behind it stand three loggias, the centre having a flat top and the two outer triangular pediments with scalloped tympana. A common entablature serves all three. Reddish-pink curtains, knotted in the middle, hang at the back of the outer loggias, but they are arranged with an eye to symmetrical presentation rather than to realism. All the columns in the upper storey are plain and have Ionic capitals.

Unlike the remaining panels, no birds figure in either of these two compositions.

Panels 2 and 6 (Pl. 16)

Onesiphoros and Porphyrios stand in the foreground of Panel 2 and Basiliscos and Priscos of Panel 6.

A wide, semicircular, semi-domed apse, ceiled with a sumptuous peacock-tail design occupies the centre of the lower storey. Mounted upon a pedestal in front of this is a hexagonal ciborium, with six spiral pillars supporting a deep entablature from which a hexagonal roof rises to a point. The entablature, plain in form, is decorated with three bands, the upper and lower having a lattice-work pattern, the centre a series of 'rayed suns'. A low lattice-work chancel screen connects the pillars, but leaves the front open. A tall, bejewelled cross, upon the top of which a dove (?) descends within a rayed mandorla or clipeus, occupies the centre foreground.

Single arcaded pavilions flank the apse on either side. These, like the apse itself, have fluted pillars and capitals that verge upon the Composite. The arches of the pavilions and the arcades of the apse, two of which appear on each side of the ciborium, are all heavily jewelled. A frieze of stylised, opposed swans, with vases as centre-pieces, is the chief feature of the entablature, which is common to both the pavilions and the apse. Tall candlesticks, with lighted candles, stand in the centre of the pavilions.

Of the three loggias comprising the upper storey, the two outer stand above the pavilions on either side of the apse. In both cases four columns, on a deep base



ONE OF THE MOSAIC PANELS IN THE DOME



DETAIL FROM THE MOSAIC CEILING OF ONE OF THE BAYS

III ROTUNDA OF ST GEORGE, THESSALONICA

or parapet, carry an ornate dome that curves upwards at its outer edges in defiance of all the laws of perspective. A lamp hangs from the centre of each. The central structure is set back, as though extending behind the apse. It is difficult to say whether it is an octagon or a hexagon, and its form is further complicated by two projecting pillars on either side. A triangular pediment rises above the cornice between the two foreground pillars. Two vases and two doves also appear upon the cornice and two phoenixes are placed just above the parapet between the outer loggias and the central structure.

Contrasting with those of the outer loggias, the pillars of the central structure are plain. On the other hand, the capitals of the latter are similar to the capitals of the lower storey, while those of the outer loggias follow a more simple design.

Panels 3 and 5 (Pl. 15)

Damian and Cosmas appear in Panel 3 and Ananias and an unknown saint in Panel 5.

In this panel it is the upper storey which has an apsidal character, while the lower has as its centre-piece what appears to be an open rectangular loggia. In front of this loggia a circular ciborium stands upon a rectangular base. The ciborium has six pillars, the two in front ornamented with jewels and bands of pearls and arranged, not equidistantly, but three on each side. They support a high entablature displaying a Greek fret frieze. Above this is a ribbed cupola. Three steps lead up to a table or a backless throne, bearing an open, sacred book, beneath the ciborium. A curtain running between the two rear pillars backs the lower part of the ciborium, and a lamp or a wreath hangs from its ceiling.

The rectangular loggia behind is carried on four pillars, the two in the foreground being spiral and the two in the rear plain. The cornice is surmounted by a low triangular pediment. Two tall candlesticks with lighted candles stand one on each side of the ciborium in front of this loggia.

Flanking the central structure are two narrow pavilions, their foreground pillars decorated with bands of pearls and supporting, above their entablatures, low curved pediments with scalloped tympana. These, in turn, are enclosed by pairs of projecting pillars, ornamented with jewelled bands. A common entablature serves the central structure and its two flanking pavilions; another above the projecting pillars has a slightly different design.

The central structure of the upper storey consists of a semicircular apse flanked by porticoes. In the apse five arcades support a ceiling in the form of a scallop shell. An ornate lamp hangs from the ceiling in the centre, and turquoise curtains, knotted back, half-close the porticoes. The pillars are uniformly plain.

Outside the porticoes, and standing upon the lower pavilions and the enclosing pillars, are rectangular loggias. Crosses, Latin in their shape, but ansated in Oriental fashion, that is to say, with the 'handle' of the 'P' open at the bottom, and with pendants hanging from their arms, stand on each of the flat foreground cornices. Dark plumaged birds are placed on either side of the crosses. Exquisitely coloured peacocks stand beneath the crosses between the four fluted columns of each of the two loggias.

In the panels the capitals are Corinthian throughout except in the ciborium, where a slightly more simple form is preferred, and in the apse arcades of the upper stories. Here, in Panel 3, a simple, rather crude form appears; in Panel 5, two are simplified Corinthian and two are Ionic.

Panel 4 (Pl. 14)

(Panel 8, above the apse, has been entirely lost)

An unknown saint and Eucarpios stand in the foreground. Only the inscription and a forearm have survived of the figure of Romanos, originally in the centre.

The centre section of the lower storey is planned on lines similar to those of the upper storey in Panels 3 and 5. A central, arcaded apse, with a low curved pediment and a scalloped ceiling, is again flanked by porticoes. Here, however, the proportions are taller, the porticoes narrower, and the whole effect is more substantial as well as more ornate. The foreground pillars of both apse and porticoes carry bands of pearls. Dark plumaged phoenixes stand on the cornices of the porticoes.

Within the apse and extending forward from it is a low chancel screen. Unfortunately, only a small part of this remains, but it appears to have been hexagonal in form with an entrance in front. Romanos,

like his companion saints, was placed outside this chancel and on a lower level.

The pavilions that, one on either side, flank the porticoes appear to be visualised on a quarter circle ground plan. The front and inside faces are straight, but behind this can be seen an unmistakably curved line belonging to the lower edge of the entablature. Moreover, in addition to the two foreground pillars, which support a triangular pediment, three more are visible behind. White, silken curtains, strikingly decorated with vivid, round patches of colour, half close the rear openings and fountains play inside. Spiral bands ornament all the ten pillars of the porticoes.

Much of the upper storey is missing. In the central part a long, flattened arch, from which hang a row of pendants, runs above and behind the vestiges of a triangular pediment, which surmounts an almost entirely lost architectural structure above the apse. An ornate vase stands at each end of the arch. On either side, above the lower pavilions, spiral columns carry a nearly semicircular arch, from which spring pieces of cypress-like foliage. Behind each arch is a glimpse of a flat-topped loggia. The entablature, uniform in all sections of this storey, carries a frieze of opposed swans. This is smaller than, but is otherwise identical with, those in Panels 2 and 6.

Corinthian-type capitals are the rule throughout this panel with the exception of the central composition of the upper storey. The one surviving capital of this is clearly Ionic.

Two distinct aspects of these architectural compositions emerge from the foregoing analysis. Firstly, the structures do not enclose a space as is normally the architectural function of a temple or a house; they represent instead a magnificent façade, the three-dimensional presentation of which only the more emphasises the fact that it is intended as a façade. Secondly, the ciboria, the chancels and the various sacred symbols indicate a cult-purpose analogous to the sanctuary of a church.

The architectural form shown in these panels had long been a familiar one to the Roman world. Some of the later rock tombs of Petra executed under strong Hellenistic influence, El Deir and El Khasne in particular (*circa* late first or early decades of the second century A.D.), bear such detailed resemblances that it is almost tempting to think that the artist of St George had been inspired by them (Pl. 18). The same form was used in the frontages of such civic buildings as the Library at Ephesus (early second century A.D.) and the Agora at Miletus (first century A.D.). The Propylaeum at Gerasa also follows what are essentially similar lines. In first-century Italy it appears in Pompeiian fresco decoration, notably the Porta Regis mural of the Casa di Apollo, and in Rome in the Thermae of Titus and the Casa di Livia on the Palatine. Another example is to be found in the Paris and Oenone stucco relief in the Palazzo Spada, Rome, although, in this case, the version is more simple and practical and a complete house is indicated. The most widespread use of this architectural form, however, appeared in the *scenae frons* of the late Hellenistic and Roman theatres. The theatre of Aspendus in Pamphylia in southern Asia Minor may be cited as an obvious example, but countless others can be recalled from the Mediterranean provinces of the Roman Empire.

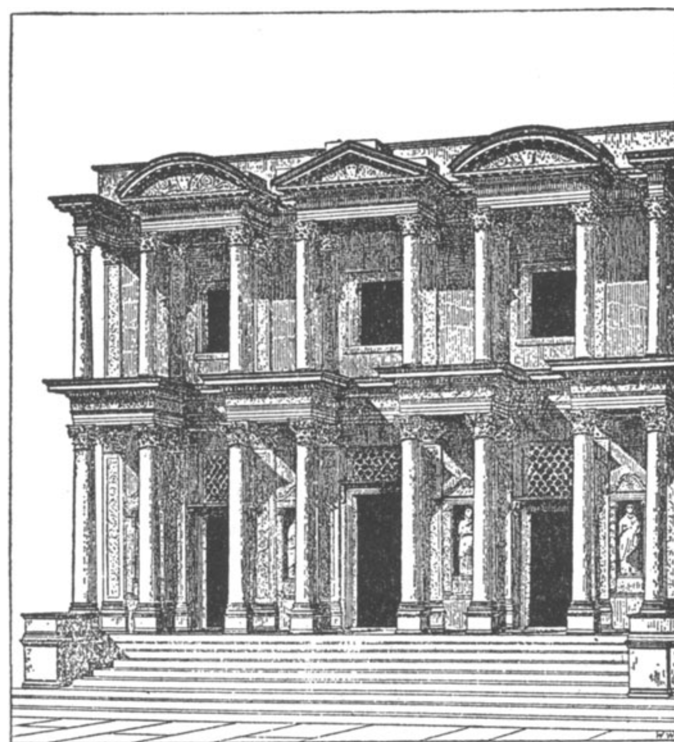


Fig. 48. FAÇADE OF THE LIBRARY, EPHESUS
(Reconstruction by Wilberg)

The atrium of Basilica A at Philippi and the entrance to the Exarchate Palace at Ravenna show that

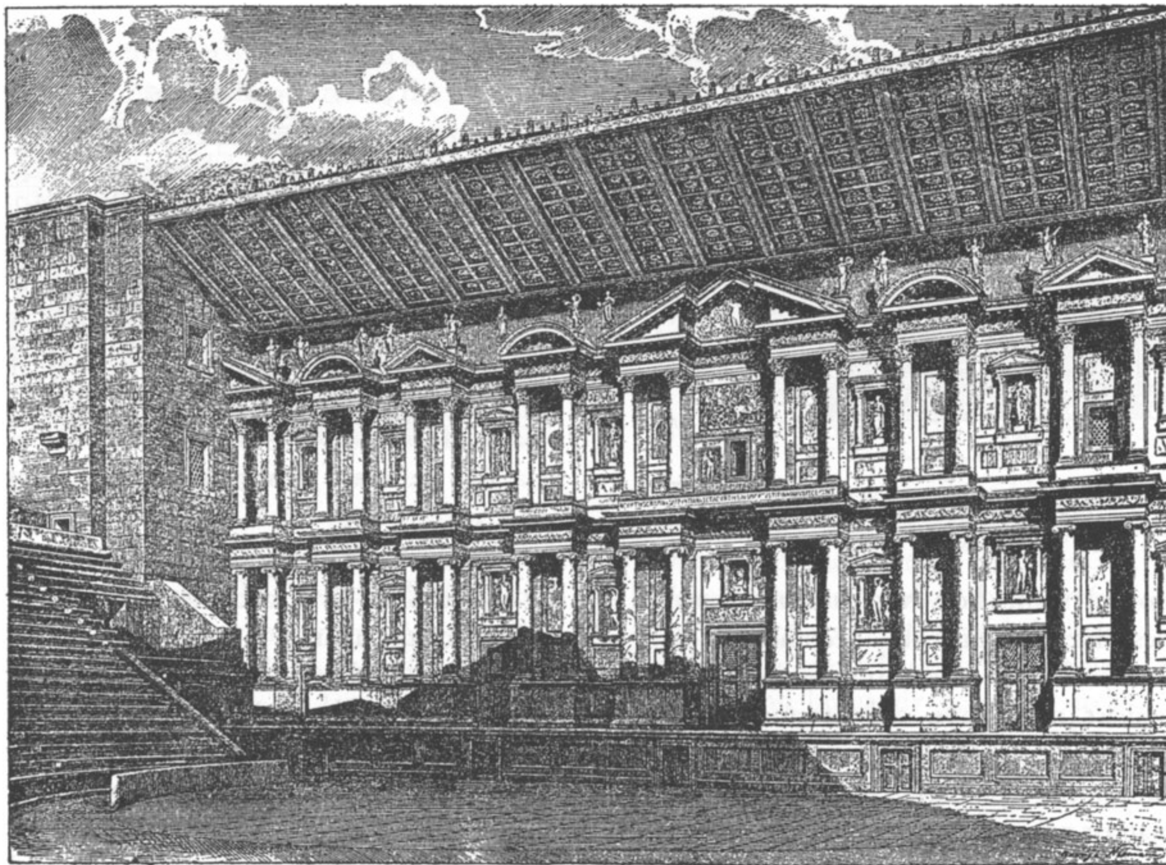


Fig. 49. *SCENAE FRONS* OF THE THEATRE, ASPENDUS, ASIA MINOR
(Reconstruction by Lanckoronski and Niemann)

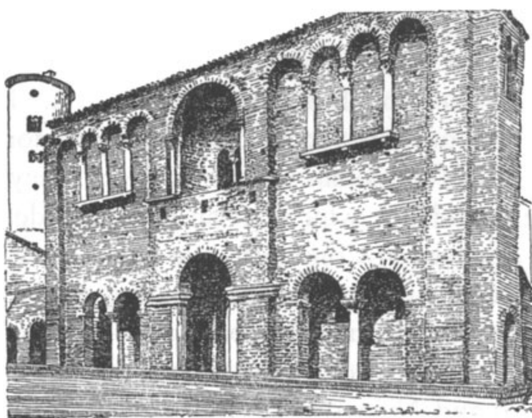


Fig. 50. ENTRANCE OF THE EXARCHATE PALACE, RAVENNA

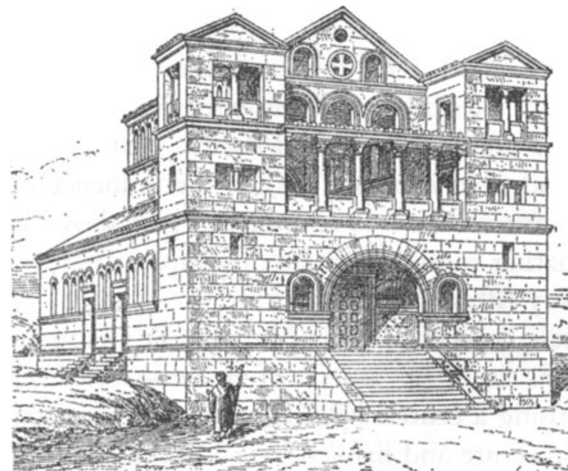


Fig. 51. WEST FAÇADE OF CHURCH AT TURMANIN, N. SYRIA

the form survived into the fifth and early sixth centuries. In a degenerated version it appears in the mosaic of Theodoric's palace in S. Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna. In Syria, the 'Hilani' towered west fronts of the churches of Turmanin and Ruweha again repeat the essential features.

Palestinian Syria contains an example of particular interest, the mosaic representations of the early Church Councils in the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. The mosaics surviving into our own century were executed in 1169 on the initiative of the Byzantine Emperor Manuel Comnenos when Palestine lay under

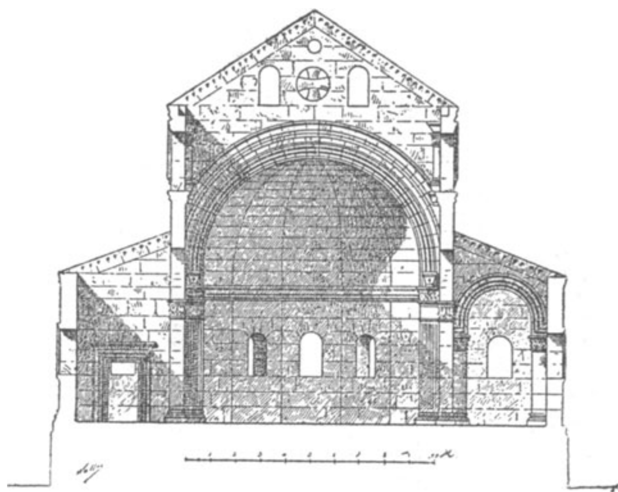


Fig. 52. TRANVERSE SECTION OF CHURCH AT TURMANIN, N. SYRIA

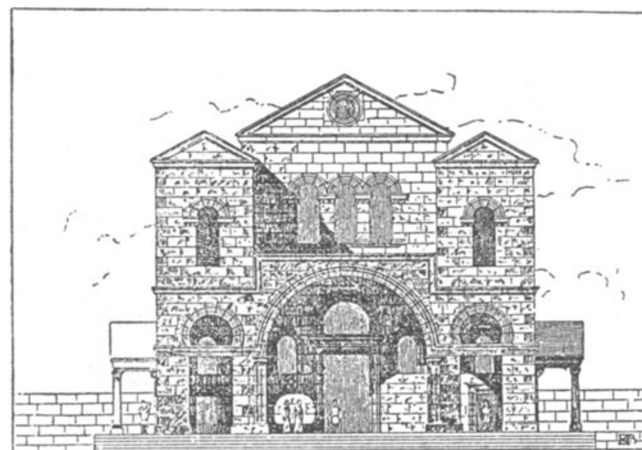


Fig. 53. WEST FAÇADE OF CHURCH AT RUWEHA, N. SYRIA

Arab dominion. It seems, however, that these replaced earlier mosaics which had probably been heavily damaged or defaced. In such circumstances the twelfth-century mosaicist may have only restored earlier mosaics, modernising here and there and, of course, inserting details of the Councils in place of representations of human or other living creatures in deference to the Islamic tenets of the occupiers (Pl. 18).

So little remains of Parthian and Sassanian architecture that generalisations have to be based upon a relatively small amount of evidence. Nevertheless, the popularity of this form of architectural façade cannot be questioned. It was a feature of the palaces of Hatra and Ctesiphon and was extensively adopted by the Arab conquerors. In all Persian examples, however, and even in many Syrian, the influence of the architecture of the *ivan* and the city gate shows in the dominating central — in later examples often sole — doorway (Pl. 18, Figs. 51, 53).

These comparisons apply to the St George compositions in their aspect of a two-storied façade comprising a central opening or exedra supporting a superstructure and flanked by porticoes and towered pavilions. In their other aspect, that of a structure serving a cult purpose, we find ourselves observing what is essentially, however extravagantly contrived, the principle of a wide central apse, flanked by a subsidiary chamber on either side. In fact, we have a fanciful but clear picture of that tripartite form of sanctuary characteristic of Syrian and Mesopotamian churches. In three versions a ciborium stands in the centre of the apse, in the fourth a chancel, 'a fence of . . . lattice work' to quote Eusebius's description of the cathedral of Tyre, occupies this — the Oriental — position of the altar.

As far as we know, which is really very little, the full structure of the Oriental tripartite sanctuary was not introduced into Thessalonian church architecture for another century, when it appeared in the tiny Chapel of Hosios David. The Basilica of St Demetrius (412–13) effected a compromise between Rome and Syria, but a few years later 'Acheiropoietos' (*circa* 440) reverted severely and conservatively to the Occidental plan.

These facts and considerations of style imply that the St George mosaics were probably the work of an artist from the capital, not from Macedonia. In this case they not only are a revelation of the splendour and brilliance of Theodosian monumental art, they indicate the ascendancy which Syrian liturgical ideas had already achieved in Constantinople in less than three-quarters of a century. Perhaps, too, they may convey to us something of the splendour of the sanctuaries of the great late fourth-century basilicas, as, for instance, Epidauros and Nicopolis B, not to mention the lost churches of Constantinople itself.

There was no conflict in this union of the towered façade and the cult purpose. The concept of the whole decoration of the dome was the creation of, in Lethaby's words, 'a localised representation of the temple of the heavens not made by hands'. The golden façades rising behind the martyr saints were the forecourts of Heaven, behind which the apostles walked in glory and, ultimately, Christ Himself, attended by the archangels, sat enthroned. This was

not simply the signification of a great and monumental work of art; it expressed in visual terms the Church's fundamental liturgical concept. The martyr saints, who had proved themselves by dying for Christ as Christ had died for men, appeared as the officiating priests in the Divine — here the Heavenly — Liturgy. Thus, the complete composition represented in early Byzantine terms the supreme experience of Christian worship. Such a concept was not necessarily common to the whole contemporary Christian world. Like the tripartite sanctuaries and the use of the dome to signify the sky temple, or Heaven, it was Oriental, that is to say, Syrian or Mesopotamian rather than Roman. The artist portrayed a religious experience, a 'communion' that was purely spiritual and which had rejected all hint of physical participation by the congregation. Contemplating it one recalls those essential points of difference between the Roman and Oriental liturgies discussed in Chapter II.

The concept of the portals of Heaven as the ideal site for the supreme act of worship by mortal men was an ancient religious idea. Its origin was not Hellenic; it was essentially Oriental, where 'as sacred buildings were imitations of the other world, so their doorways were significant symbolically of the great doorway in the firmament'.[1] The Achaemenian kings of Persia who entered Heaven through their rock tombs carved into mountain faces, in their lifetimes received tribute and dispensed the law at the gates of their palaces. In consequence, as Baldwin Smith has written:

> The palace and temple developed as interrelated forms of architecture. In every theocratic society, where the royal dwelling was revered as a sacred edifice, temples were customarily built like palaces, or palaces like temples. Throughout Antiquity and the Middle Ages there appear to have been recurrent parallels between kingly and divine dwellings, royal and religious ceremonies and the formal rituals pertaining to the adoration of godlike kings and kinglike gods. Hence the importance of the palace-temple concepts in the formation of architectural symbolism. As long as the human imagination was limited to thinking of the unknown in terms of the known, to conceive of the invisible only by means of the visible, it remained instinctive for the common man to see in the most memorable aspects of the Sacred Palace, the Royal Stronghold and the King's Gate heavenly images, visions of paradise and cosmic forms. Even when this figurative imagery seems artificial in the Late Antique panegyrics and stereotyped in the iconography of the Middle Ages, it should not be forgotten that it was still vividly real to the uneducated masses and that to the authors of the Bible and to thinkers, like St Augustine in his 'City of God', it was a graphic means of conveying mystic ideas.[2]

Moreover, to quote Baldwin Smith again:

> because the gateway of the king's stronghold in the Ancient East was the centre of public life, the portal where god-images made their seasonal entrance, the place where the populace took part in the appearances and triumphal receptions of their divine rulers, and the archway where a king sat in judgment, its bounding towers and brilliantly decorated arched opening acquired royal, divine, celestial, and anagogical values. Partly because of this association of ideas the towered façade was transferred to palaces and temples, where it was seen and remembered as a mark of royal power, of a heavenly abode and of a seat of authority.[3]

As empires covering vast expanses of territory replaced the city-state in the ancient Near East, the function of the city gate ceased to be purely defensive. It developed as the link between the city and its rural environment, and as a meeting and a market-place. Gradually it became a principal administrative centre; and, as it assumed so many of the ancient functions of the palace gate, so it adopted its essential architectural features — and its ancient symbolism.

Not only did this development scarcely occur in Greece, it was foreign to Hellenic ideology. Here the function of the city gate remained defence. The palace gate or entrance was perhaps the point at which deputations might meet the ruler, but for no other than purely secular purposes. Greek religion excluded theocracy, and similarly Greek democracy ensured that a civic site, such as the agora, or market-place, should become the centre of a city's social life. The expansion of Achaemenian Persia and the conquests of Alexander opened the Greek world and its Roman

[1] W. R. Lethaby, *Architecture, Nature and Magic* (London, 1956), p. 112.

[2] E. Baldwin Smith, *Architectural Symbolism of Imperial Rome and the Middle Ages* (Princeton, 1956), pp. 180–1.

[3] E. Baldwin Smith, *op. cit.* p. 181.

successor to Oriental ideas and, amongst other innovations, imported the ceremonial palace façade. Nevertheless, within the sphere of Greek influence it was applied to civic buildings such as the Agora of Miletus, the Library of Ephesus and, most generally of all, to the formal background of the theatres in which were commonly depicted man's noble but futile struggles in the grip of fate.

Likewise, the Oriental royal palace, with its mystic associations of divinity, was not natural to Greece. The Oriental palace façade could not, therefore, translate into Greek religious architecture. The Greeks, having been accustomed to see their gods 'in the round' and mixing with men on the same, if not on an equal footing, had originally conceived their temples as groves or tree-lined glades. Even in terms of marble, stone and urban life, this concept remained fundamental to their religious thinking. Hellenised foreigners might reach a compromise between this Hellenic conception of religion and another the gods of which were revealed in colossal outlines among savage mountain peaks and with whom only priest-kings might speak; but Greeks themselves could not. Greek thought and artistic expression could fuse with Judaism in the service of Christianity, as it had earlier in Gandhara in the service of Buddhism, but fundamentally Greek and Persian ideology were still poles apart. Consequently, the Greek stream in Byzantine architecture evolved its own characteristic principles, insisting upon a symmetrical balance of the whole, a logical structural reason for each member and a visible projection of the inner structure to the outer walls. In Byzantine Christianity, as earlier in Hellenistic paganism, these principles remained fundamental to the Greek contribution, and their influence on Byzantine architecture waxed and waned with the strength of the Greek element.

Nevertheless, for all the intermittent resurgences of Hellenism, the victory of the Syrian liturgies in Byzantine Christianity was permanent. The ceremony of the Great Entry may not have been officially introduced into the Orthodox Byzantine service until the second half of the sixth century, but the mosaic panels in the dome of St George indicate that the Syrian liturgy, of which, with more or less ceremony, the Great Entry was always a part, was already in high favour in the capital by the end of the fourth. Stripped of their fantasy and extravagance, the ground plans and the front elevations of the St George architectural compositions are closely related to those of the tripartite sanctuaries of the early Syrian churches. By no means decorative pictures inserted merely to fill an empty space in an attractive manner, these mosaics were the carefully designed clothing of vital religious ideas.

With the passage of centuries and the increasing dominance of eastern influences in the Byzantine world, screens tended more and more to close off the sanctuary from the nave. Yet (except when expressly forbidden by the iconoclasts) figures of saints were retained as the symbolic interceders for men, and pride of place on each side of the royal doorway became the position of the two arch-interceders, the Virgin Mary and John the Baptist. There is thus a clear relationship between the end-fourth-century architectural compositions in St George and the iconostases of the Orthodox Church of to-day.

Before leaving this subject it is perhaps of interest to compare the Orthodox iconostasis, which is thought to have achieved its present form in seventeenth-century Russia, with the Gothic west front of the Western European cathedral — and with the mosaic panels of St George. (The extent to which Byzantine, and, in particular, Syrian churches may have influenced the development of Gothic is beyond the scope of this book; we must content ourselves with the observation that the Crusades and the rise of the Gothic movement in architecture were contemporary.) In iconostasis and west front alike there appears an insistence on filling every possible space with either protective symbols of sacred significance, in particular the figures of saints, or frightening figures of savage and often mythological beasts (Pl. 19).

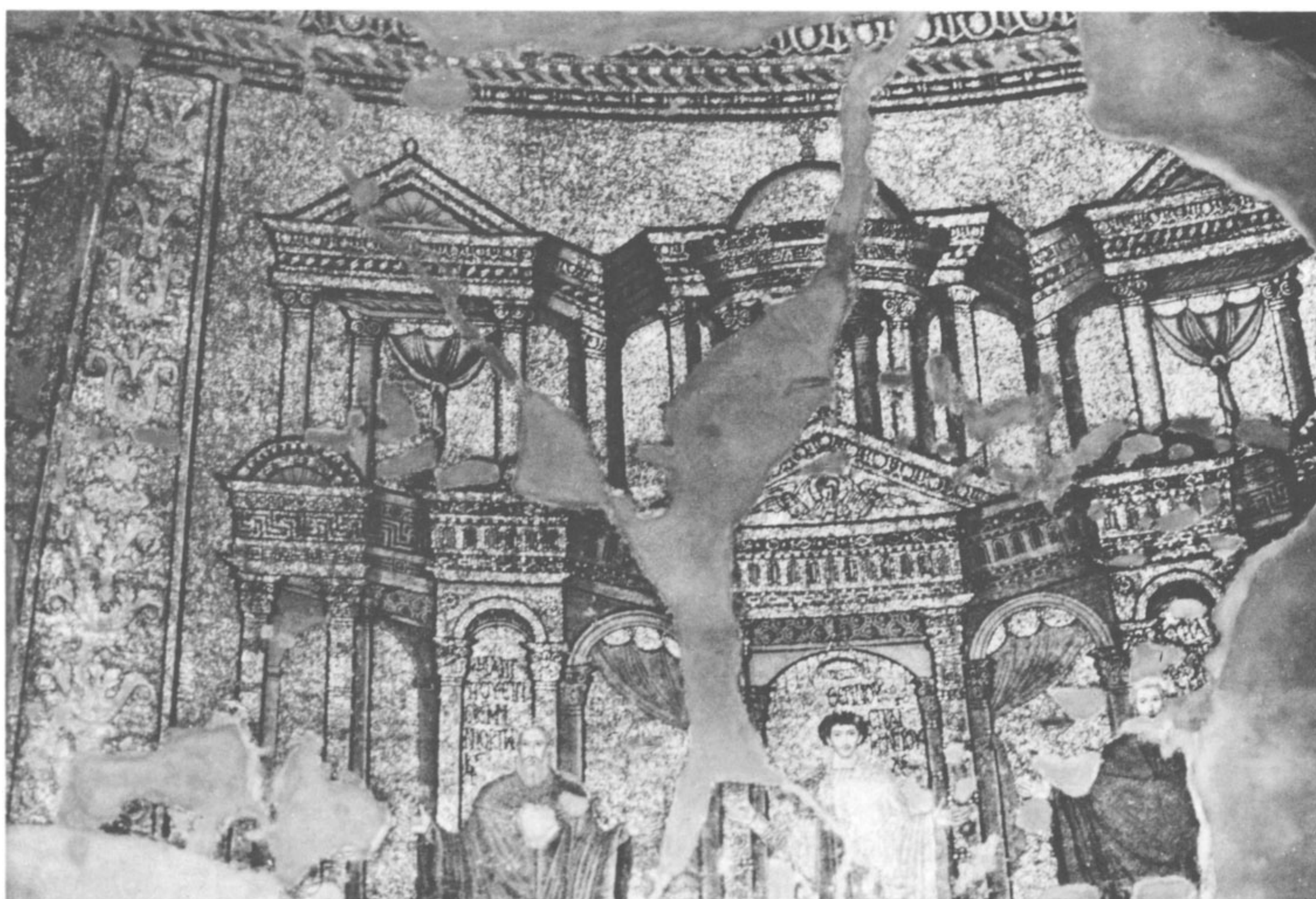
Even the siting of three doorways is identical. In the 'representational' West there appears above the central 'royal' door the figure of Christ; in the 'non-representational' East it is the Cross, the symbol of the 'Light of the World' and of the Resurrection. Again we may note that this was the position of the Sun Symbol in the ancient Near East.

Iconostasis and west front stem from the same tradition. Their important difference lies in their position, the iconostasis immediately before the sanctuary, which



a. Dome Mosaic Panel No. 1; Leon and Philemon

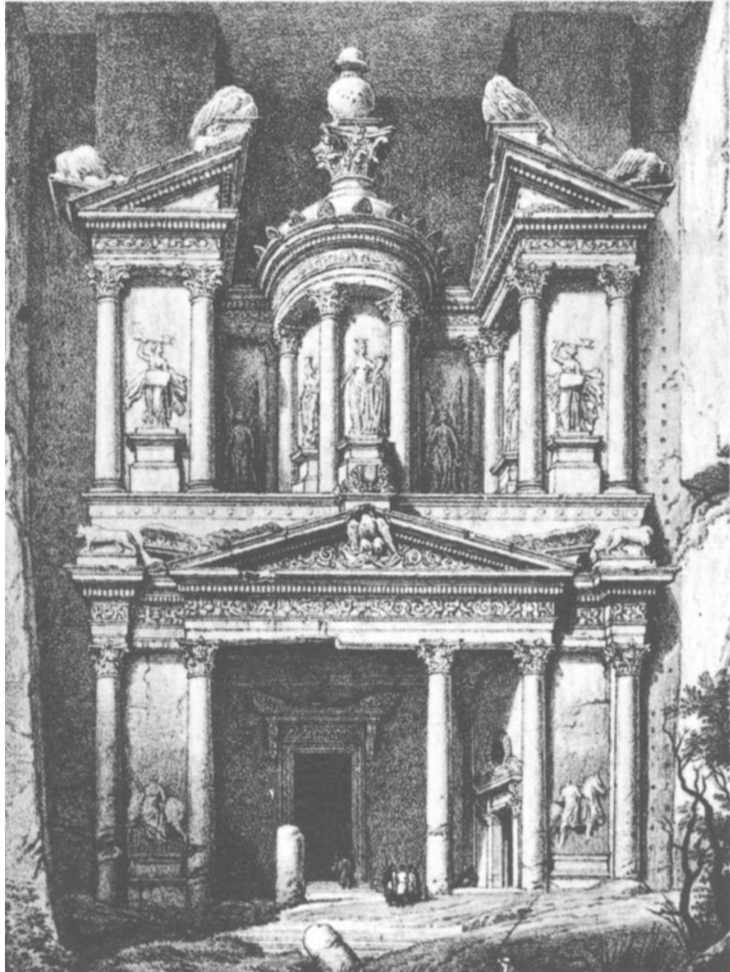
17 ROTUNDA OF ST GEORGE, THESSALONICA



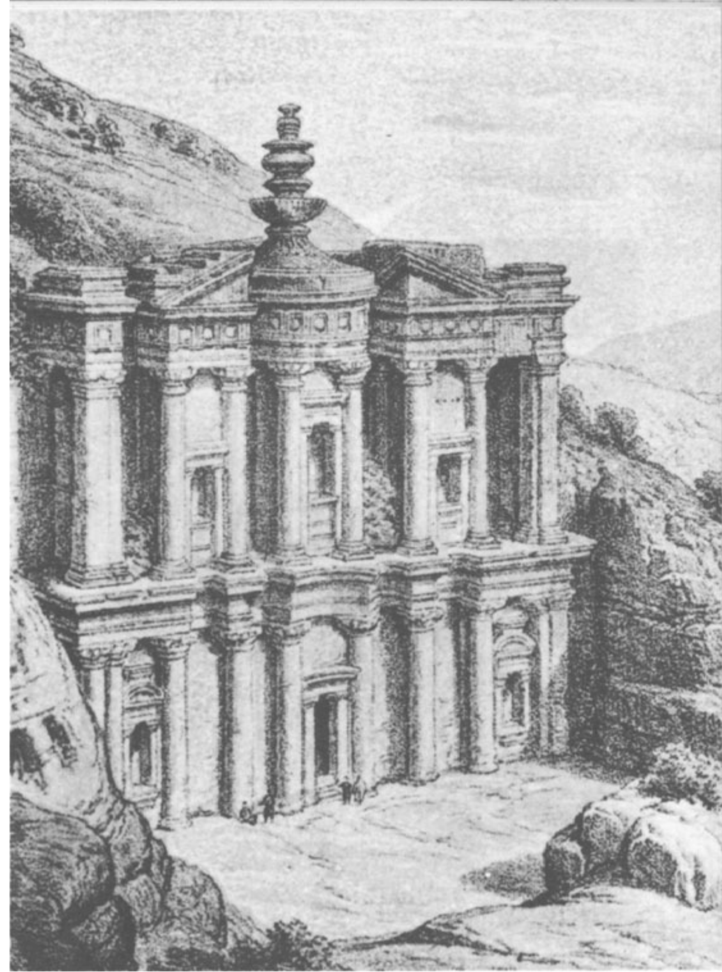
b. Dome Mosaic Panel No. 7; Philip, Therinos and Cyril



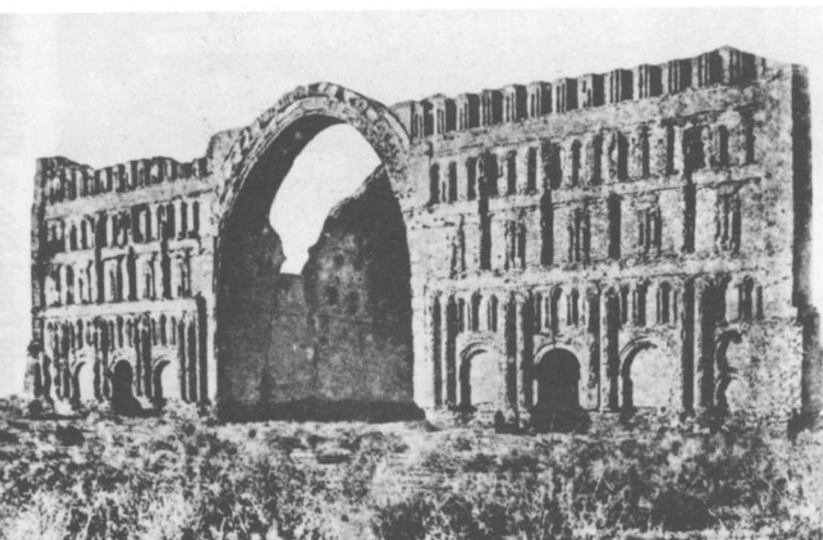
a. Agora, Miletus. Reconstruction in Pergamon Museum, Berlin



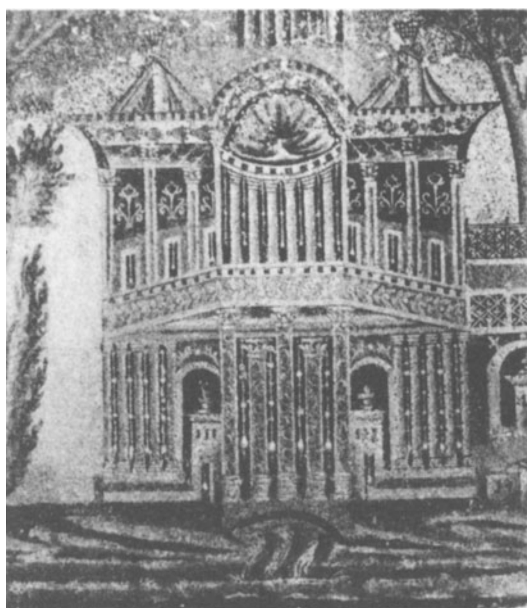
b. El Khasne, Petra



c. El Deir, Petra



d. Palace of Chosroes, Ctesiphon

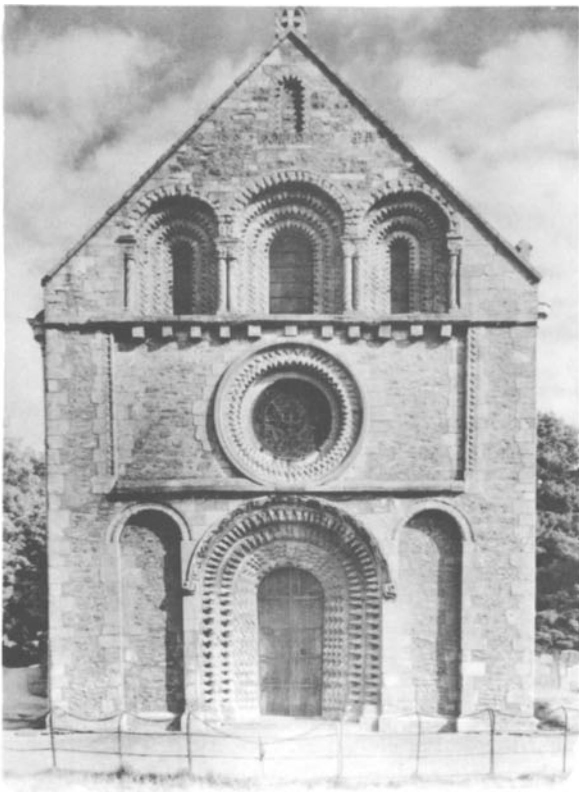


e. Detail of mosaic panel, the Great Mosque, Damascus

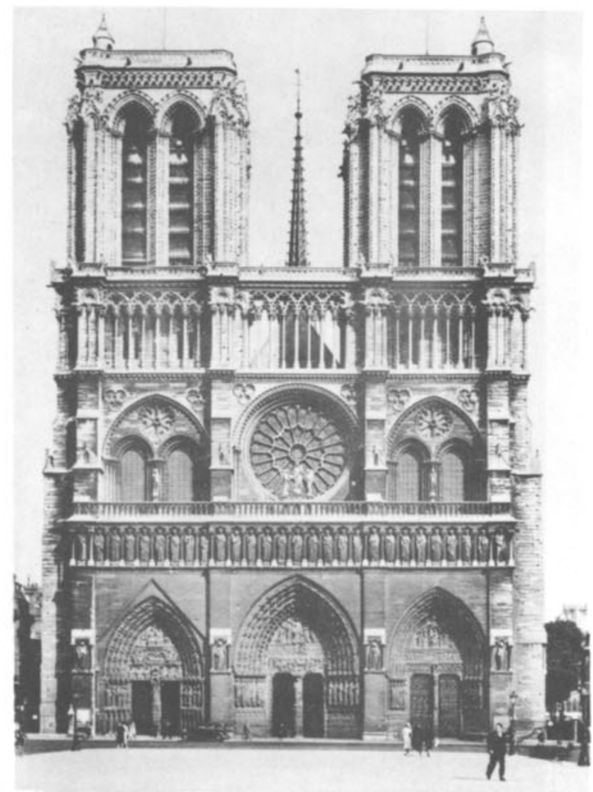


f. Detail of mosaic panel, Church of the Nativity, Bethlehem

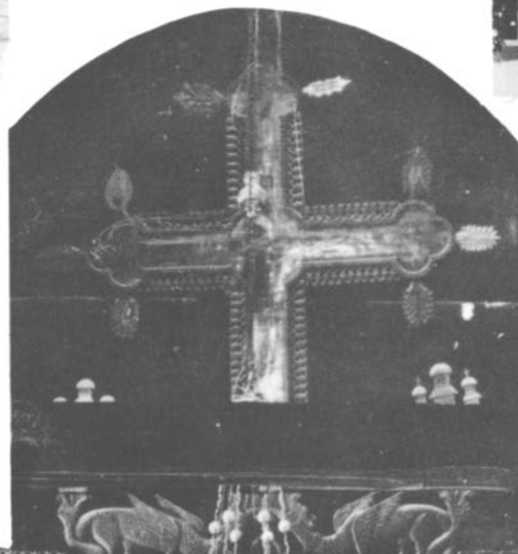
18 ARCHITECTURAL FAÇADES RELATED TO THE DOME MOSAICS OF THE ROTUNDA OF ST GEORGE, THESSALONICA I



a. West façade of the Church of St. Mary-the-Virgin, Iffley, near Oxford



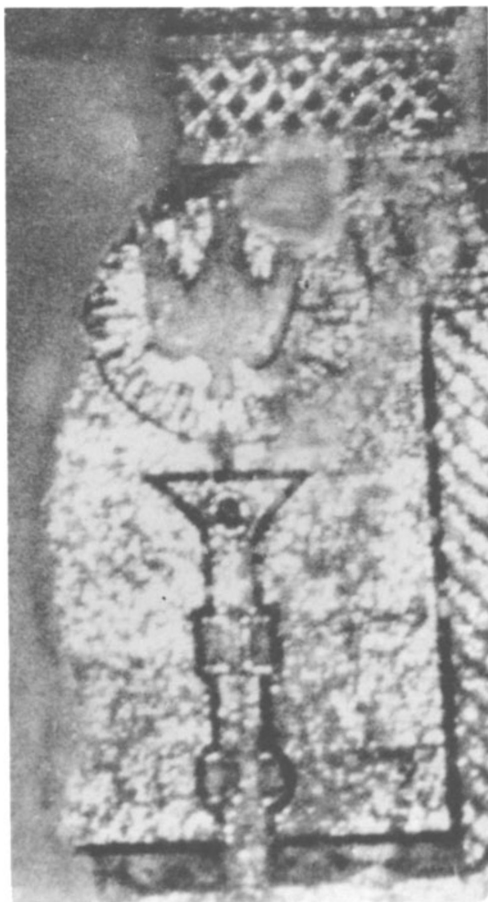
b. West façade of Notre Dame, Paris





c. Iconostasis of the Church of St. Naum, Ohrid

19 ARCHITECTURAL FAÇADES RELATED TO THE DOME MOSAICS OF THE ROTUNDA OF ST GEORGE, THESSALONICA II



a. Detail of Dome Mosaic Panel No. 6. The Holy Dove descending on the Cross



b. Detail of Dome Mosaic Panel No. 7. The tympanum of the ciborium showing two angels supporting the bust of Christ

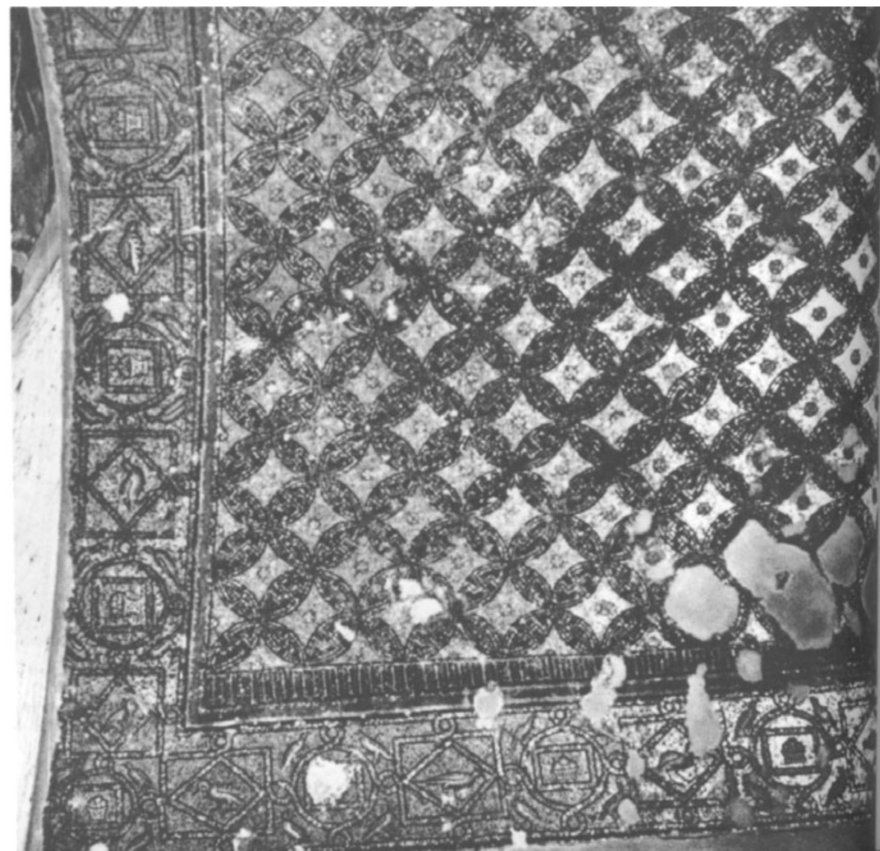
20 ROTUNDA OF ST GEORGE, THESSALONICA

Detail of mosaic ceilings in the bays (See also Plate II)

c.



d.





Detail of Dome Mosaic Panel No. 2. Porphyrios; above, the swan frieze

21 ROTUNDA OF ST GEORGE, THESSALONICA

HEADS DATED *circa* END FOURTH CENTURY ROTUNDA OF ST GEORGE


a. Onisiphoros


b. Basiliscos


c. Priscos


d. Philemon


e. Anonymous saint


f. Ananias


g. Philip


h. Therinos

CONTEMPORARY EXAMPLES FROM OTHER PARTS OF THE EMPIRE


i. A patriarch. S. Lorenzo, Milan


j. An apostle. Chapel of S. Aquilino, S. Lorenzo, Milan


k. An apostle. Ivory. *Victoria and Albert Museum, London*


l. The citizen Eutropios of Ephesus. *Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna*


m. St Ambrose. Chapel of Ciel d'Oro, Milan


n. Pope Liberius. Pretestato Catacomb, Rome


o. Emperor Theodosius I. Silver *missorium*. *Real Academia de la Historia, Madrid*


p. Stilicho. Ivory diptych, Cathedral, Monza


a. One of the Magi


b. The Virgin and Child


c. The Front of the Ambo showing the original position of one of the Magi (left) and the Virgin and Child (right)


d. The three Magi and (extreme left) an angel

24 ROTUNDA OF ST GEORGE, THESSALONICA



a. The shepherd and his flock



b. The shepherd and two of the Magi

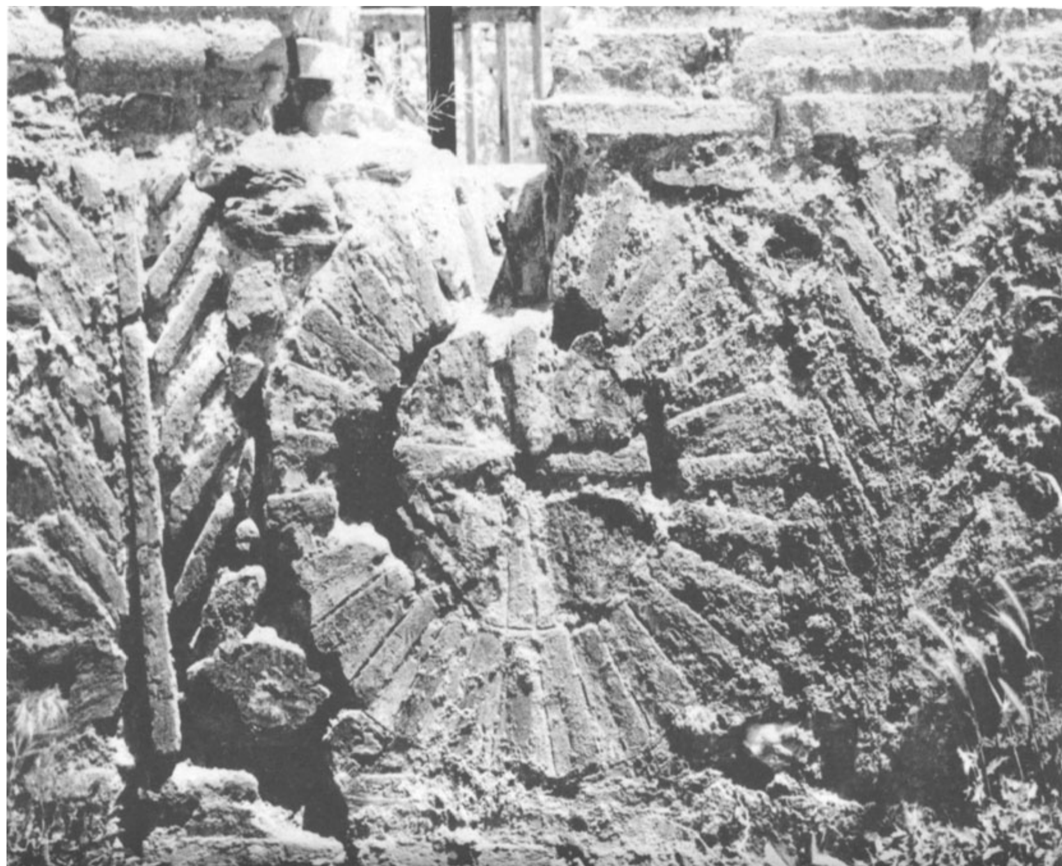


c. One of the Magi

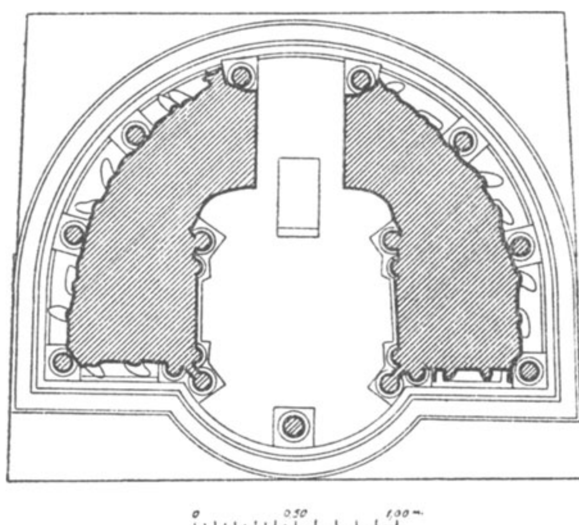


d. Fragment of a pillar

PALACE OCTAGON CHURCH, THESSALONICA



e. Detail of brickwork in the large apse



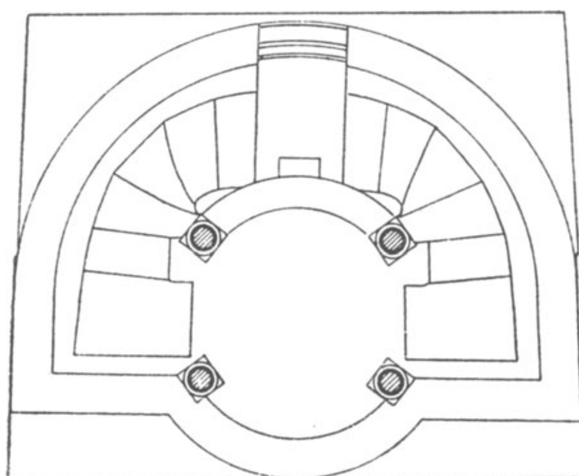


Fig. 54. ROTUNDA OF ST GEORGE, THESSALONICA. PLANS OF BASE AND PLATFORM OF THE AMBO (Reconstruction by Orlandos)

only the priests may enter, the west front forming the entrance to the church itself and opening into the nave. In this difference lies a reflection from those early centuries of Christianity, when, in the Eastern liturgies, the Eucharist was performed by the priests in the manner of a sacred mystery, while, in the Western, the clergy celebrated it openly and with relatively little ceremony before the congregation, screening the mystery of the rite only from those not admitted to the Faith.

The Ambo of St George, Thessalonica
(Pls. 23, 24)

Fragments of the large stone ambo, or pulpit, now housed in the Museum of Antiquities in Istanbul, are the only early examples of sculpture to have survived from the church of St George. Incomplete and battered as these are, they still radiate an impression of beauty and fine workmanship.



Fig. 55. ROTUNDA OF ST GEORGE, THESSALONICA. FRONT AND SIDE ELEVATIONS OF THE AMBO (Reconstruction by Orlandos)

Below bands of delicately worked acanthus and vine motives, the ambo, in its original state, presented the Adoration of the Magi. Each figure set individually beneath scalloped niches and between Corinthian columns, the three Magi are shown on one side of the ambo searching for the Christ Child, and on the other bringing Him their gifts. The Virgin, enthroned upon a round backed chair, holds the Child upon her knees. An angel introduces the Magi. Another figure, the upper part of which has been lost, represents a shepherd with his sheep around him and the skin of an animal over his shoulders. Eagles, or other large birds, their wings outstretched, occupy the spandrils between the scalloped niches.

The subject of greatest interest in the whole composition is that of the Virgin and Child. Both are seated in a frontal attitude and possess, to quote Diehl, 'a rather stiff majesty, a rather solemn gravity, which fits in well with the ideas of the new society and already foreshadows the style and iconography of the Ravenna mosaics of the sixth century'.[1]

As is similarly the case with corresponding scenes in the destroyed mosaics of St. Demetrius (Pl. 29), S. Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna (early sixth century) and the Holy Land ampoules, or small flasks, in the cathedral of Monza (*c.* 600), this 'stiff majesty', and 'solemn gravity' appertains only to the holy pair ; the Magi are presented as human characters acting in an ordinary human manner. This is a conception of the Virgin and, indeed, of the young Christ which stems essentially from the traditions of western Asia. It is far removed from the Greco-Roman representations of a human, eager Child and a human, tender Virgin, as appear, for instance, on the *circa* fifth-century reliquary of SS. Quirico and Giulitta in Ravenna, on the early fourth-century 'Theological' sarcophagus in the Lateran Museum and the door of Sta Sabina in Rome and, again, in the destroyed mosaics of St Demetrius.

Discussing the ambo as a whole, Talbot Rice summarises its importance as 'not only is the form something new and essentially Christian — unlike the sarcophagi — but also the whole spirit of the carving attests the birth of new ideas. The way in which the leaves are treated is thus distinctive, and the ornamental frieze above the figures heralds the 'light and dark' geometric ornament typical of Justinianic sculpture'.[2] Indeed, fully as much as the figures of the Martyr Saints in the dome of St George, the ambo signifies the accomplishment of that synthesis of Greece and the Orient that was to express itself in Byzantine art. The earliest known Byzantine representation of the Virgin and Child, in its style and in its isolation of the holy pair in a separate niche we have here a prototype of the 'Hodegetria' (Pointing the Way) Virgin that was later to develop as one of the key aspects of Byzantine theology and art.

While the ambo can be dated with reasonable certainty to the first half of the fifth century or possibly a decade earlier, opinions differ as to whether it could possibly have preceded the Council of Ephesus, which, in 431, for the first time granted official recognition to the Virgin as 'Theotokos' or Mother of God. The obvious importance and prominence of the work, and the hierarchic aspect of the Virgin and Child can be adduced as arguments for a post-Ephesus date. On the other hand, Thessalonica was a strong protagonist of the 'Theotokos' viewpoint and, particularly when supported by Rome, was likely to be spurred rather than restrained by disapproval from the Patriarch of Constantinople. Comparable sculptural work belonging to the same half-century include the Psamatia sarcophagus from Sidamara in Asia Minor and the chancel doorway of St Demetrius. The first lacks completely the essentially Greek sense of proportion that, despite the Oriental characteristics of the ambo, is its predominant quality. The second is also more Oriental in technique. Both appear clumsy beside the graceful, skilfully rendered figures of the ambo.

Certainly, in spirit, the Virgin and Child of the ambo are closely allied to the martyr saints in the church's dome. How their facial expressions corresponded with those of the saints in the dome is unfortunately impossible to tell; but it is, to say the least, an admissible theory that had the Virgin and Child been placed in the dome, they would have been represented in a fashion very similar to their portrayal on the ambo. If this was the case, the ambo and mosaics may have been almost contemporary works, a

[1] C. Diehl, *Manuel d'art byzantin* (Paris, 1925), vol. i, p. 284.

[2] D. Talbot Rice, *The Beginnings of Christian Art* (London, 1957), p. 87.

dating which would place the carving of the ambo to about the last decade of the fourth century. It must be remembered, too, that in early Christian ideology the Magi were symbols of the Gentiles. This fact made the theme particularly apposite in a city whose Church was a foundation of the great Apostle of the Gentiles and one, therefore, which might well have been adopted in Thessalonica at a relatively early date.

4. THE PALACE OCTAGON, THESSALONICA (Pl. 24)

In 1950 an octagonal structure was discovered within the area of Galerius's palace, a situation lying to the south of the Rotunda of St George and the Triumphal Arch.

Macaronas, in a preliminary report on the excavations, has shown that in size and, to some extent, arrangement, it was comparable with St George.[1] The octagonal walls enclosed seven apses, the eighth wall, facing south-west, containing the entrance. Six of the apses were identical, but the one opposite the entrance was appreciably larger than the rest. All comprised rather more than a semicircle, thus appearing slightly horseshoe in plan. From the head of one apse to that opposite was about 30 metres. A circular building, 14·20 metres in diameter, and probably used as a baptistery, stood close to the entrance.

[1] X. I. Macaronas, Archaeological Reports, ΜΑΚΕΔΟΝΙΚΑ, vol. 2, 1941-52, pp. 594-7 (Thessalonica, 1953), (Greek).

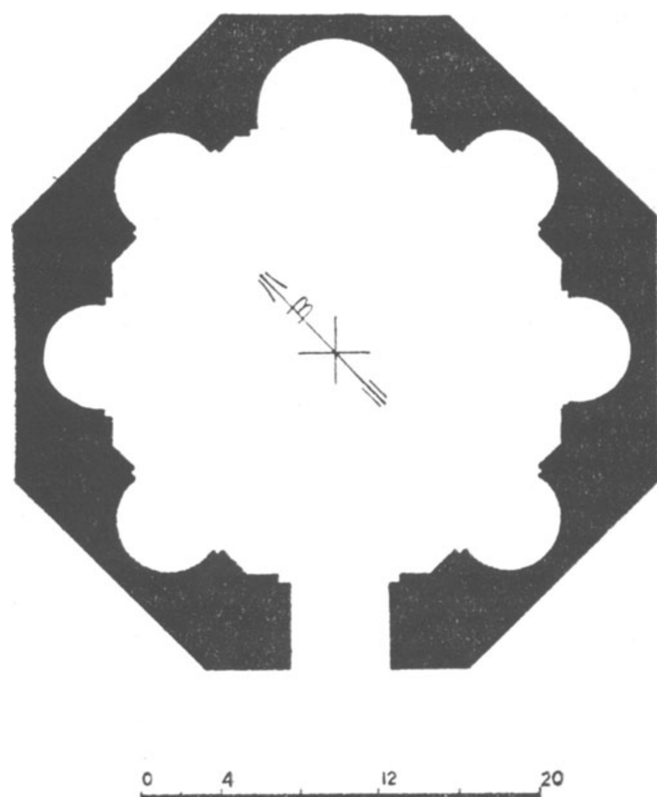


Fig. 56. PALACE OCTAGON CHURCH, THESSALONICA. PLAN

The interior of the octagon appears to have been richly decorated. Traces of mosaic flooring have been found, and marble slabs re-used in neighbouring houses indicate that the walls were revetted with the finest materials. A small fragment of a massive pillar, with crosses carved in low relief within diamond and rectangular fields, also seems to have belonged to the building.

One of the most interesting features of the octagon is a section of ornamental brickwork in the centre of the north-east apse. Almost at ground level, a cross with equal arms, each consisting of a single brick, is enclosed within a circle of rayed bricks. On each side of this is what appears to be a brick-composed palm branch. This unusual decorative brickwork raises a number of questions. First of all, we need to ask whether, in fact, it is a Christian symbol. The cross and the palm branches argue strongly in favour. On the other hand, the equal-armed cross enclosed within a circle and surrounded by rays, was one of the commonest symbols of the sun god and his fiery chariot. In the latter event another explanation than palm branches would be required for the two lateral designs. Could they be symbols of fertility, perhaps immense ears of corn such as those that sprung from the death wound of the bull slain by Mithras?

The situation of these symbols in the centre of the main apse would normally be a sign of their importance. Yet, how can we reconcile this rough — if skilful — brickwork with the mosaic floors and marble revetments that covered less significant parts of what was a large and splendid building? Could it be that it was secretly inserted and covered over by Christian workmen erecting a pagan building in the palace of Galerius? This is unlikely since the cross as a Christian symbol was rarely used until after the discovery of the True Cross in Jerusalem by Helena, the mother of

Constantine. Or, in different circumstances but for similar reasons, was it introduced by workmen who were followers of Mithras? If, however, the insertion was openly made with the simple object of sanctifying the most holy part of the building, the question of whether the symbol is Christian or pagan will be decided by — or will help to decide — the date the octagon was constructed. Should this brickwork represent a Christian symbol openly employed, the octagon cannot possibly have been constructed in the time of Galerius as part of his palace, as was first thought. It is to be hoped that completion of the excavations and publication of a full report on them will provide solutions to the problems of these remains.

A possibility, which may or may not be resolved by further research, exists that this building and not the Rotunda of St George may have been that great church of the Archangels or Asomati which was the original cathedral of the city before the erection of Aghia Sophia in the eighth century. The presence of the baptistery close by is a strong factor in support of this contention, for a baptistery was ordinarily attached only to episcopal churches.

In 1957 a marble arch was found which is thought to have been originally used in a recess of a wall near to the octagon (Pl. 9). Clearly pagan in conception and detail alike, and belonging to the era of Galerius, it is of particular interest in the extent to which it is a prototype of Thessalonica's Christian iconography. Two medallions in the demi-spandrils enclose, on the right, a bust of Galerius and, on the left, the bust of a crowned woman, probably representing the Tyche or Fortune of Thessalonica. Mosaic medallions enclosing busts of saints in very similar style, were to appear later in the Basilica of St Demetrius. The presentation of Galerius with the Tyche of Thessalonica may, however, indicate the emperor's local elevation to heroic if not to divine status. In Thessalonian minds, St Demetrius was to be, as we shall see when discussing the Church of St Demetrius, closely associated with the Virgin; but at an early stage he was also connected in the popular imagination with the Lady Evtaxia, who seems to have been a carry-over from paganism into Christianity (see page 149 below). Before Christianity a Cabir had been similarly linked with a goddess, as the Heroic Horseman had been by the Thracians. Galerius and the Tyche fall into this changing pattern of a constant basic theme of protector god or hero and goddess.

Holding the two medallions are two men in Persian costume, the popular fifth- and sixth-century dress of the Three Magi, including those on the ambo of St George. Towards the centre of the arch two winged 'cherubs' each hold branches thick with leaves and fruit. Particularly important in relation to the soffits of 'Acheiropoietos', at each end of the soffit is carved a cantharus, from which spring twin interlacing vines, carrying thick bunches of grapes and leaves. These rise to a central medallion containing the bust of Dionysus, who, in 'Acheiropoietos', is transformed into a cross or the Gospels.

5. THE TWO BASILICAS AT DION

In the extreme south of Macedonia, at the foot of the northern slopes of Mount Olympus, lay the ancient city of Dion, or Dium. Here have been discovered the remains of two early Christian basilicas. Little, unfortunately, beyond the site of the semicircular apse and parts of a mosaic floor, has been discovered of the earlier church, which has been dated as probably fourth century. The second, larger and built over the site of the first, can be ascribed with reasonable certainty to the fifth.

In its main aspects this second church appears to have been a typical Hellenistic basilica of the period. It had a wide nave, two lateral aisles, a protruding, semicircular apse and a narthex, the west wall of which was twice the width of the others. The interior measurements were 27·25 by 18·90 metres, to which must be added the depth of the narthex, 5·20 metres.

The arrangement of the columns lining the nave is a peculiar feature of the church. The columns are not placed equidistantly; the intervals vary from 1·10 to 1·80 metres. Sotiriou infers from the shortness of these intervals that they supported straight architraves rather

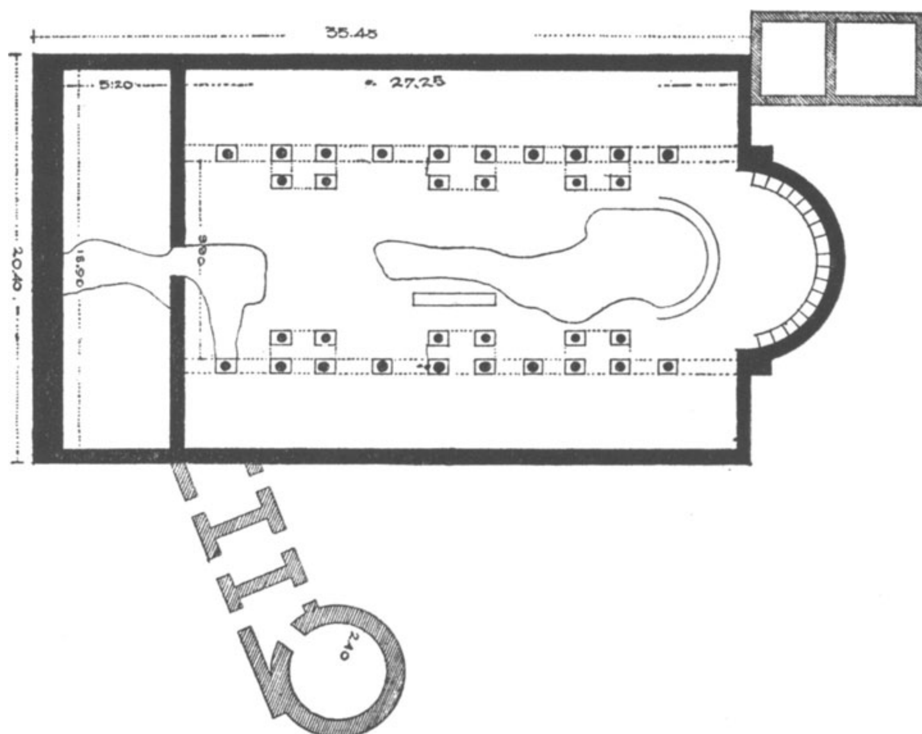


Fig. 57. TWO BASILICAS AT DION. PLAN

than arcades.[1] An even more unusual feature is the presence of three massive piers on the insides of each of the rows of columns. Built with deep foundations, each forms a base for two columns, which, although smaller in size, are placed opposite two of the regular columns of the nave. It is difficult to estimate their purpose on the available evidence. With due reservations, Sotiriou suggests that they may have been later additions intended to buttress the structure. On the other hand, the possibility does not appear to have been excluded that they may have been part of the original basilica. Their presence might then explain the asymmetrical arrangements of the lines of columns. Only a thorough excavation can provide the answer to this. Should the second possibility prove correct, we would be faced with the surprising appearance of a Syrian and totally un-Hellenic fourth-century Christian basilica in Dion, an eventuality which in the light of our present — extremely limited — knowledge we have no reason to expect.

Later additions to the second basilica which were discovered in the course of the excavations include two rectangular rooms at the north-east corner, and a circular building, probably a baptistery, standing away from the south side and connected with the south aisle by three obliquely placed chambers.

[1] G. A. Sotiriou, ΑΡΧΑΙΟΛΟΓΙΚΗ ΕΦΗΜΕΡΙΣ, 1929 (Athens), p. 180.

6. THE BASILICA OF ST DEMETRIUS, THESSALONICA (Pls. IV, 25-34)

The earlier of Thessalonica's two surviving fifth-century basilicas is the Church of St Demetrius. Erected by a Prefect named Leontius, whose period of office was 412-13, in gratitude for his restoration to health through the intercession of the saint, it replaced the much smaller martyrium built in the fourth century. Leontius's structure was severely damaged by fire during the reign of Heraclius (610-41). Rebuilding followed quickly in spite of the stringency of the times and was completed around the third decade of the seventh century. A second calamitous fire occurred in 1917, reducing the church to much the same derelict condition as had resulted from the disaster of thirteen centuries earlier. Again it has been restored and, as was the case previously, the architects followed the general lines of the earlier church. In consequence, while the present newness of certain parts contrasts a

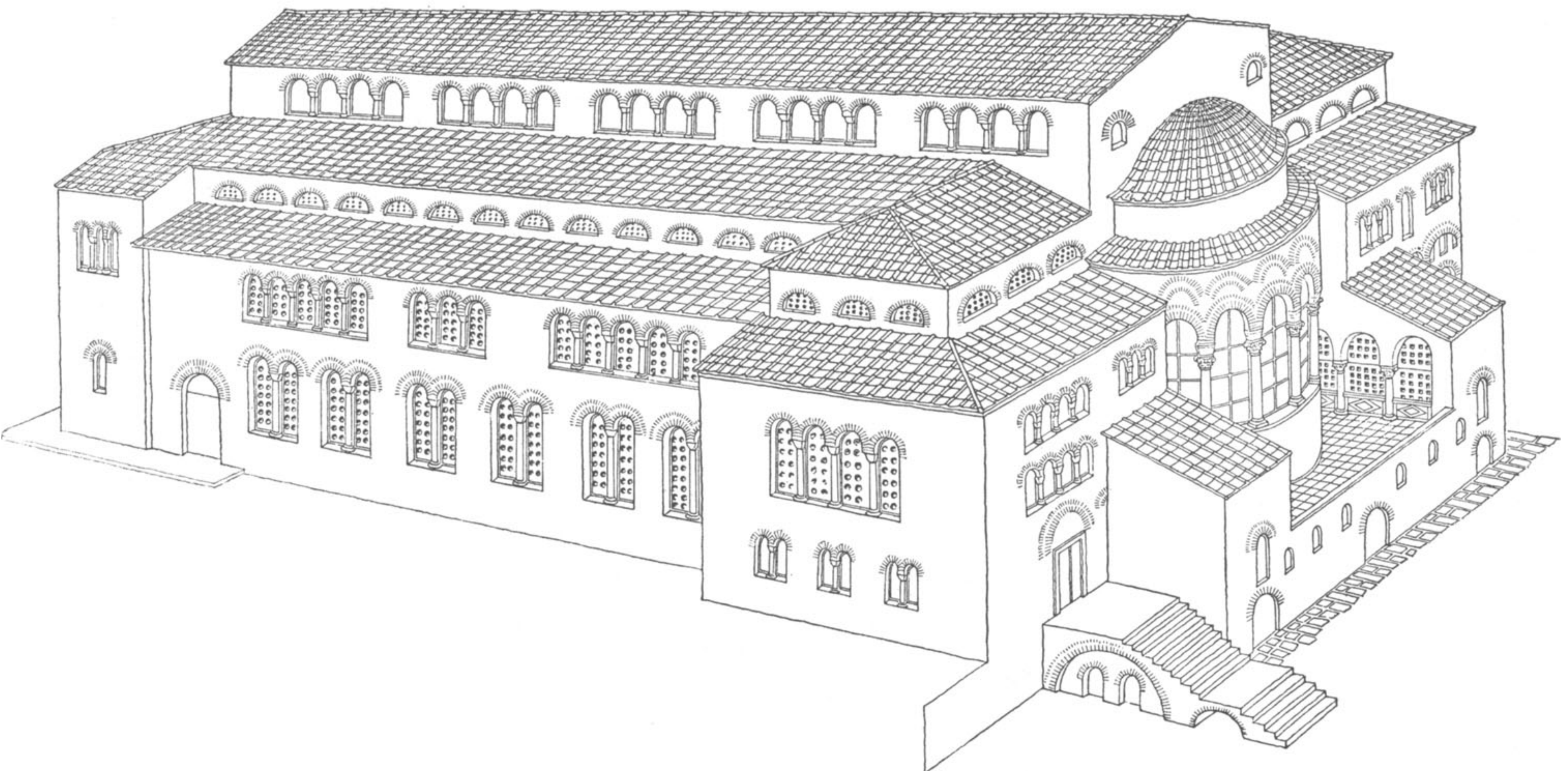


Fig. 58. BASILICA OF ST DEMETRIUS, THESSALONICA. THE FIFTH-CENTURY BUILDING OF LEONTIUS
(Reconstruction after Sotiriou)

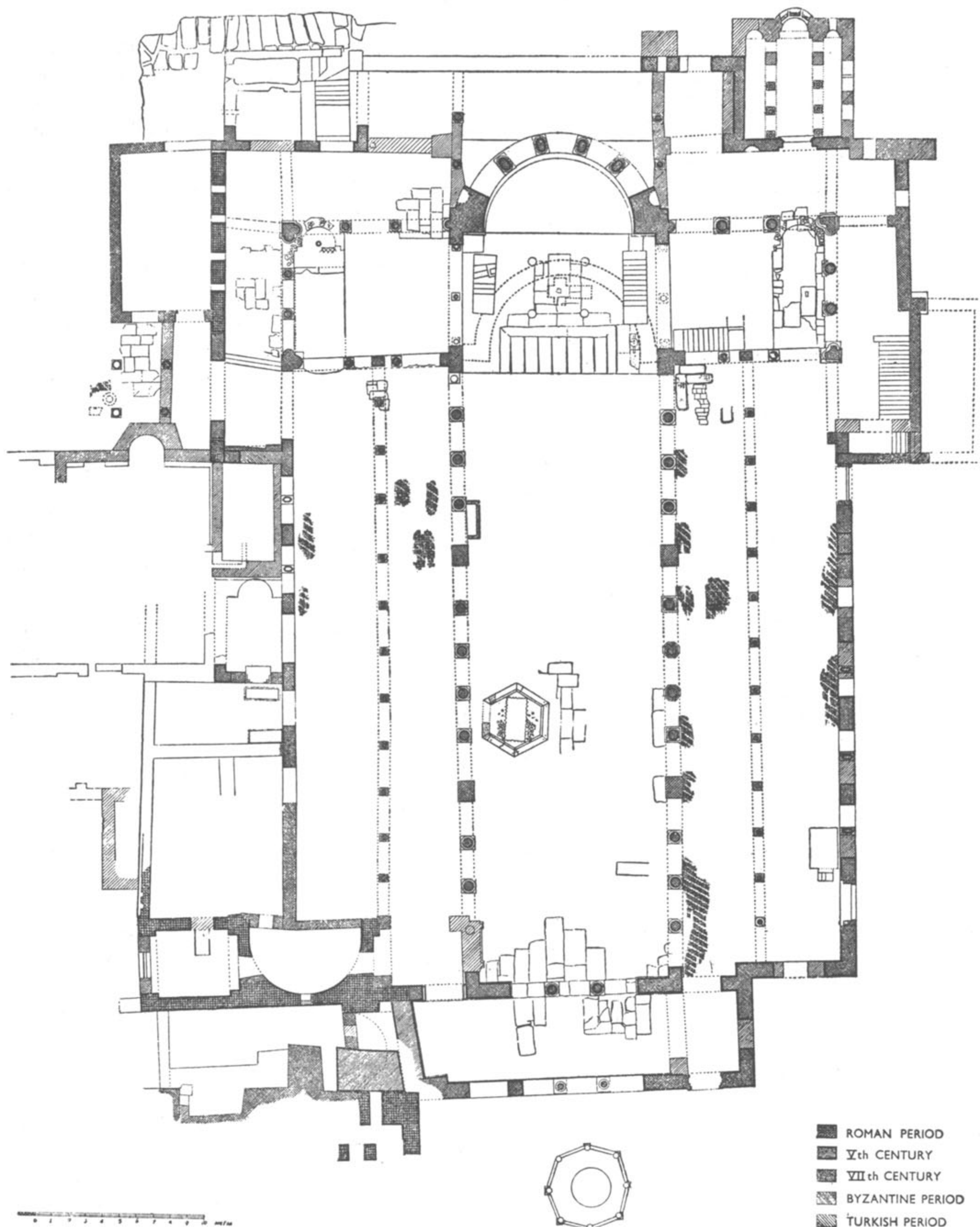


Fig. 59. BASILICA OF ST DEMETRIUS, THESSALONICA. PLAN OF PRESENT STRUCTURE

little disconcertingly with the mellowed — and sometimes battered — antiquity of others, by exercising imagination we are still able to realise in the church of St Demetrius as it is to-day something of the early fifth-century conception of Leontius.

Leontius's basilica was built early in the reign of Theodosius II (408–50), very shortly, at most three decades, after the conversion of the Rotunda of St George and its mosaic decoration. It antedated by half a century St John of Studion, the earliest surviving church in Constantinople. It was approximately contemporary to the Episcopal Church of Korykos in Cilicia, and followed by a few years the transept basilica of St Menas, built by the Emperor Arcadius near Alexandria in Egypt. Nearer at hand, it belonged to that same period, covering the late fourth and early fifth centuries, that saw the construction of many of the great early Byzantine basilicas of Greece, including examples at Nicopolis, Epidauros, Ilissos, Corinth, Sicyon and Thebes.

Two to three years before, in 410, Alaric and his Visigothic followers, having earlier left a trail of terror and destruction throughout the Balkans, had accomplished the downfall and sack of Rome. Five years before this calamity, Honorius, the western emperor, had moved his capital from Milan to the greater safety of Ravenna. In the eastern half of the empire the death of the weak Arcadius and the accession of Theodosius II had introduced an atmosphere of greater security. In the face of the increasing power and growing ambitions of Constantinople, Macedonia was loyally maintaining her ecclesiastical allegiance to Rome, and Pope Innocent I had appointed Rufus, Bishop of Thessalonica, to be his Vicar Apostolic. In the economic sphere Macedonia was no longer in the advantageous position of straddling a great imperial highway. The western sector of the Via Egnatia had suffered complete disruption. Eastward routes alone remained open, providing access to civilised order and to commercial markets.

The Fourth-Century Martyrium

Although the early sources state that the original Church of St Demetrius, erected by the saint's followers soon after the Peace of the Church, was razed to the ground in order to make way for the great new basilica of Leontius, the possibility appeared tenable that this might be the tiny basilica in the crypt. Sotiriou has now conclusively disproved this theory. Parts of the tiny basilica belong to the structure of the Roman baths, but the rest, including the apse, date from the fifth century.[1]

On the other hand, while excavating the area immediately behind the recessed wall west of the arc of piers in the crypt, foundations were discovered of another apse not belonging to the baths but which can be ascribed to the fourth century. This apse, measuring approximately nine metres across, covered almost the total width of the present nave, the colonnades of which coincide with earlier walls of the baths. Confirmation that this apse formed part of the first Church of St Demetrius appears in the existence narrowly within its eastern extremity of the small cruciform reliquary crypt containing a flask of blood-soaked earth which lies below the present altar. The position of the flask itself is centred upon the axial line of the apse (Fig. 60).

Whatever the reasons for situating the reliquary crypt so close to the wall of the apse, such a position was clearly incompatible with the requirements of fifth-century Christian worship. Consequently, the new apse was built farther to the east, and a massive arc of piers was constructed to serve as its foundations. This new plan made room for a bishop's throne in the centre of the wall and enabled the altar to be placed above the holy relic (Fig. 59).

It appeared to the excavators that the walls of the baths corresponding to the present nave colonnades were used as the walls of this first church, indicating that the apse was disproportionately wide. How far the church extended to the west is uncertain, evidence having been found of several transverse walls of the baths, any of which could have been used. As at Philippi, the Christians of Thessalonica at the time of the Peace of the Church seem to have been mainly drawn from the poorer classes, for the remains of St Demetrius's first basilica indicate it to have been little more than an adaptation of part of the baths.

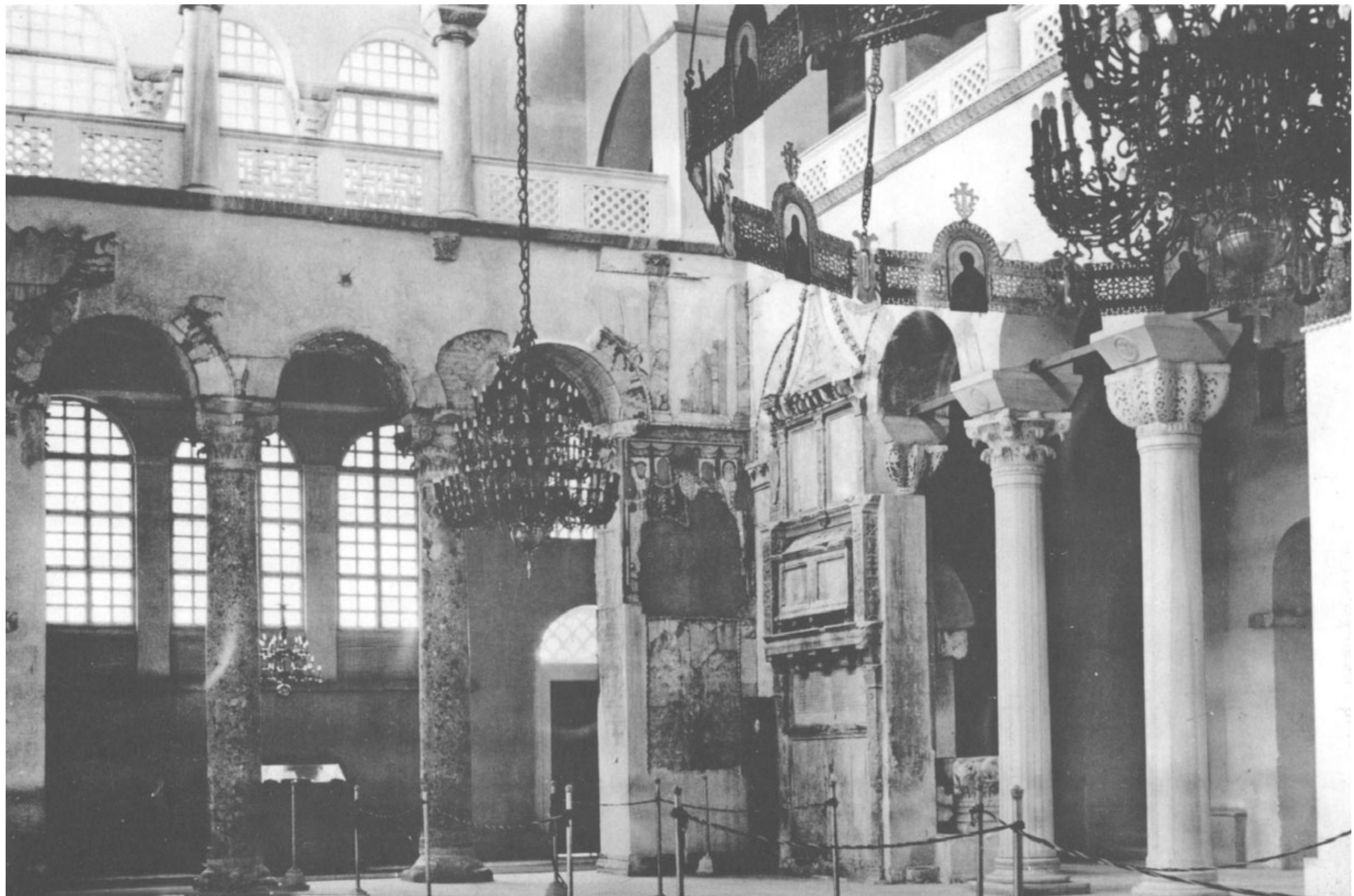
[1] G. and M. Sotiriou, Η ΒΑΣΙΛΙΚΗ ΤΟΥ ΑΓΙΟΥ ΔΗΜΗΤΡΙΟΥ ΘΕΣΣΑΛΟΝΙΚΗΣ (Athens, 1952).

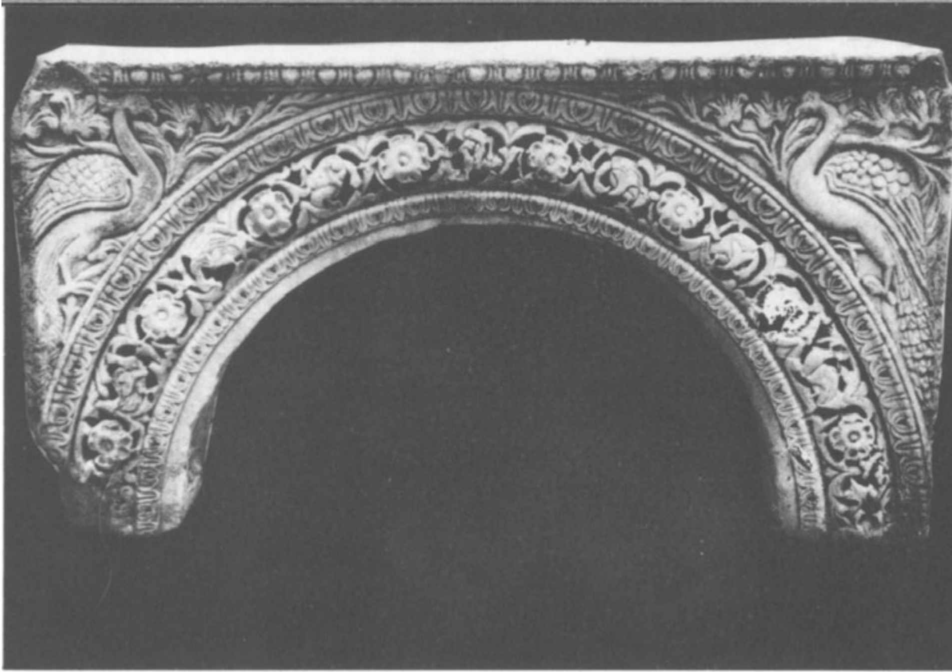


a. Interior; the east end. On the pier in the centre are the mosaics of St Demetrius and the Children and of the Virgin and St Theodore

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b. Interior; the tribelon and the north west corner of the nave. In the centre is the damaged mosaic of St Demetrius and the Four Ecclesiastics





a.

Chancel portico arches

b.



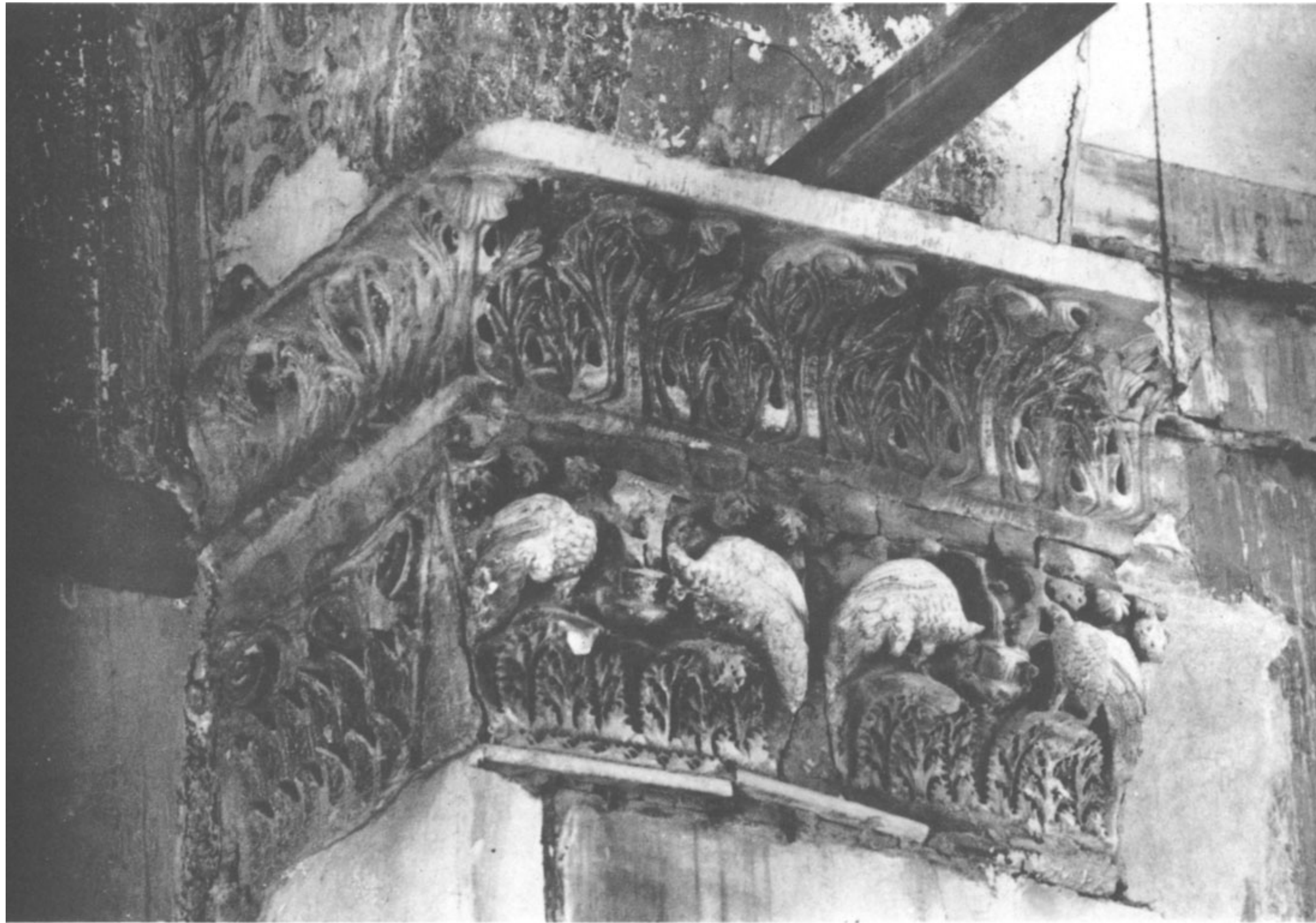


c. Detail of chancel portico pillar

d. Crypt. Central structure



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a. Pilaster at the western end of the southern nave colonnade



b. Capital, north wing of the sanctuary



c. Capital, tribelon



a. Acanthus capital from the triple window of the narthex. Fifth century



b. Pilaster capital from the apse window. Fifth century



c. 'Wind blown' acanthus capital from the nave. Fifth or early sixth century



d. Ram capital from the nave. Fifth century



e. Eagle capital from the nave. Sixth century



f. Stylised relief capital from the nave. Early sixth century

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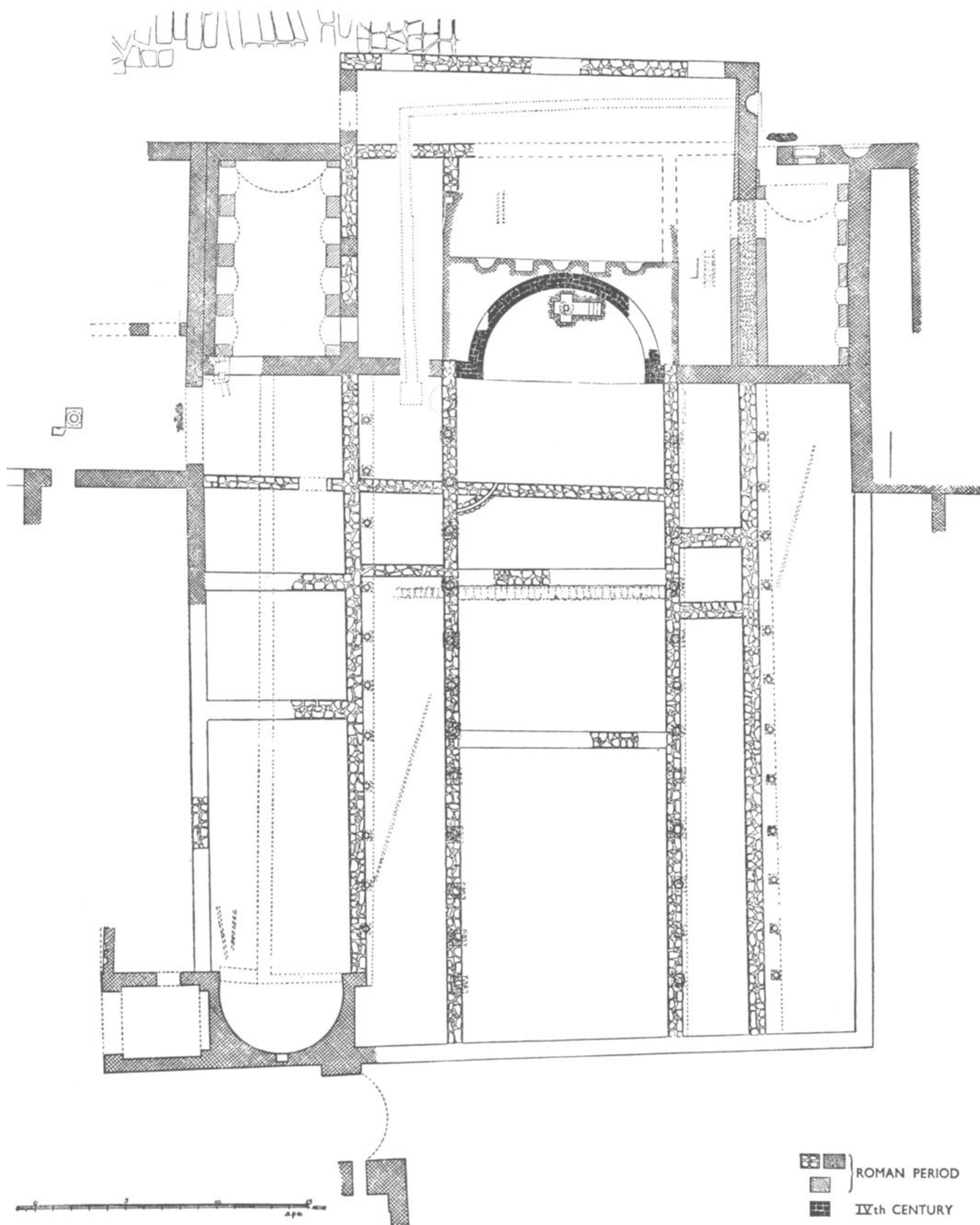


Fig. 60. BASILICA OF ST DEMETRIUS, THESSALONICA. FOURTH-CENTURY MARTYRIUM. PLAN SHOWING THE SITUATION OF THE APSE AND THE RELIQUARY CRYPT

The Fifth-Century Basilica

Thanks to Sotiriou's recent authoritative study of the Church of St Demetrius,[1] we are not only able to reconstruct the fifth-century martyrium of Leontius but follow the various structural modifications of the seventh and twentieth centuries.

St Demetrius had been imprisoned, it will be recalled, in rooms belonging to some baths while Galerius watched the games which included the defeat of his champion gladiator, Lyaios, at the hands of the young Christian, Nestor. The same day, while still in his temporary prison, the saint was murdered on the emperor's orders.[2] When Leontius planned his new basilica in 412, he demolished the fourth century church and altered adjoining parts of the baths into a spacious crypt. This was situated beneath the eastern end of the church and opened on to the street outside which was on the same level. Most of the remaining structure of the baths was demolished and replaced by the basilica. The stadium, lying to the west, was transformed into an atrium for the church and some of its tiers of seats re-used as steps.

The original fifth-century basilica was timber ceilinged and consisted basically of a nave and four lateral aisles having, at their eastern end, a tripartite sanctuary. The latter, with a protruding, semicircular, five-windowed apse, was inscribed within a transept and an eastern projection, the whole being precisely situated above the crypt. West of the nave was a narthex and atrium, and from the west end of the northernmost aisle there jutted northwards two chambers belonging to the earlier Roman structure, the more northern one of which was the new repository for the tomb of St Demetrius. Galleries ran above the two inner aisles and the narthex, but did not extend into the transept. The total length, including the narthex, was 57 metres.

A tribelon provided a ceremonial entrance from the narthex into the nave. Subsidiary doorways opened into the inner aisles. Rows of twelve columns separated nave and aisles, with the exception of the northernmost, where the antechamber of the room containing St Demetrius's tomb left place for only eleven. Piers stood at the eastern ends of all four rows, and from those terminating the nave colonnades high arches were sprung across to two more piers at the chord of the apse.

These twin arches, in effect, divided the sanctuary into its three divisions: the central area, consisting of the bema and the apse, and the wings, or parabemata, on either side. The episcopal throne was placed in the centre of the apse, but the presbytery seats were ranged on the north and south sides of the bema. Between them and beneath a ciborium, stood the altar and under this was a small, shallow, cross-shaped crypt. This held a glass phial containing earth soaked with human blood, reputed to be that of St Demetrius.

A marble screen, pierced by a porticoed doorway (Pl. 26), part of which is now in the Byzantine Museum in Athens, separated the bema from the nave. This entrance, which is reproduced and incorporated in the iconostasis of the present church, was surmounted by a quadruple arch carved with entwined floral and foliate designs, and, in the demi-spandrils, either peacocks against a background of branches, or angels with smaller peacocks. The arches stood upon square pillars; the faces of which carried foliate and zoomorphic designs, some with a curiously Scythian air and which had square Corinthian capitals. The carving of the borders and the spandrils is in low relief, but now and again a tendency to emphasise contrasts of light and shade is seen.

The reconstruction of the chancel screen which appears in the present church, although with slight modifications, such as terminal doorways, to conform with the modern requirements of the Orthodox service (Pl. 25), follows the contemporary fifth-century style and accords with the original fragments which have survived. It consists of a parapet of sculptured marble slabs between square carved mullions or pillars, the upper parts of which are transformed into round columns with Corinthian capitals supporting an ornamental architrave. Icons now hang in place of the fifth-century curtains which could be opened or closed as required.

On the northern side of the nave a hexagonal base marks the site of the famous silver ciborium of St Demetrius, the accidental setting afire of which in 581

[1] G. and M. Sotiriou, *op. cit.*

[2] See above p. 70.

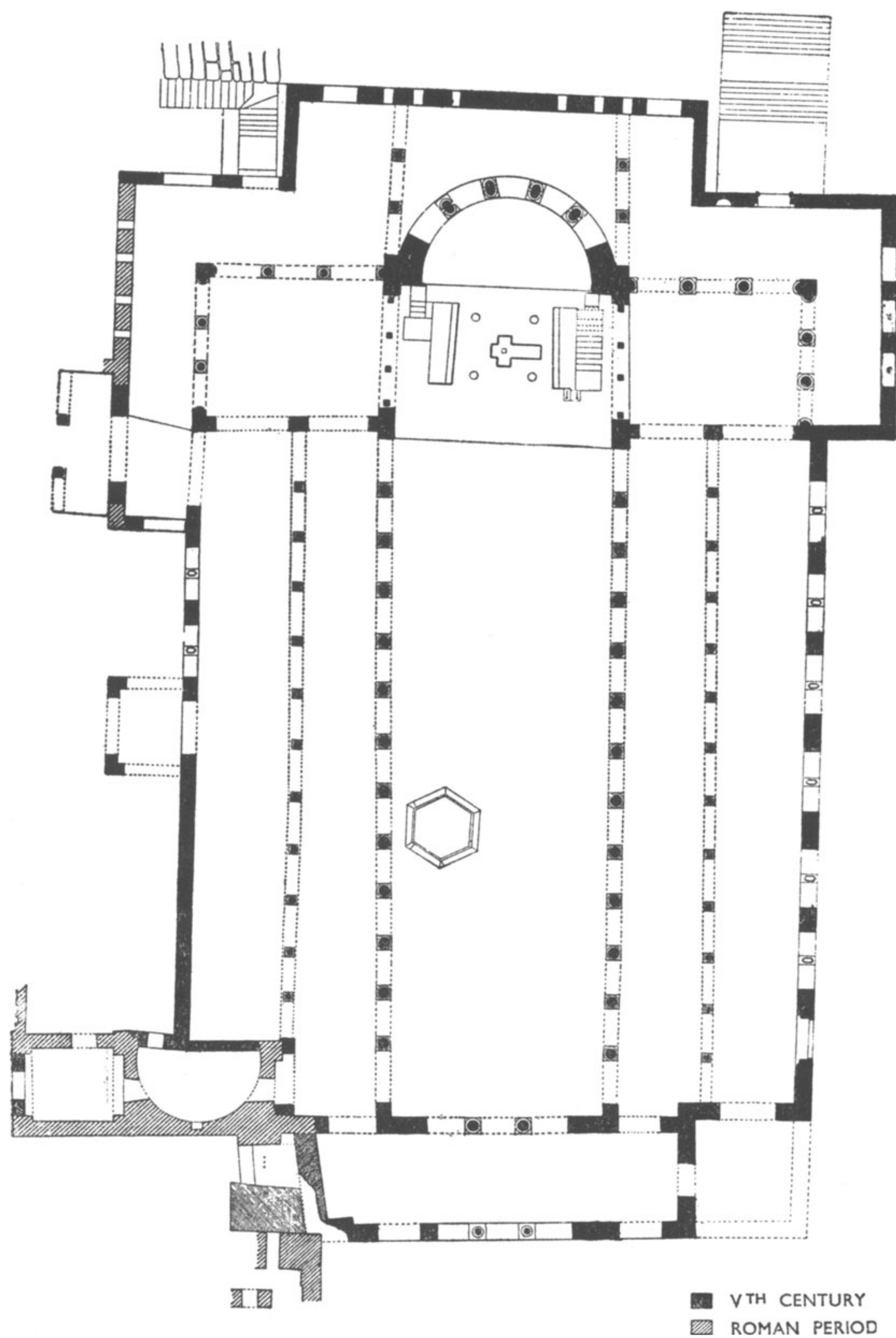


Fig. 61. BASILICA OF ST DEMETRIUS, THESSALONICA. PLAN OF FIFTH-CENTURY BUILDING
(Reconstruction by Sotiriou)

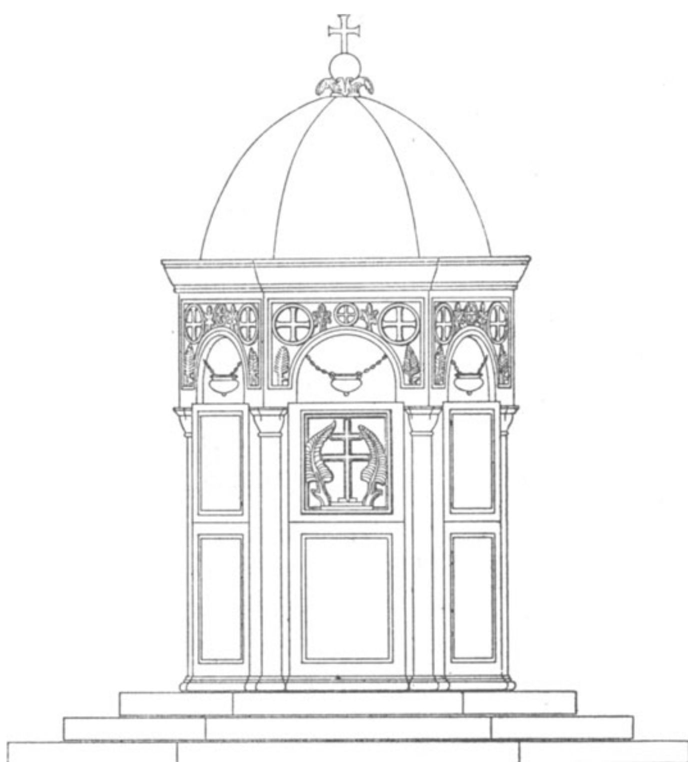


Fig. 62. BASILICA OF ST DEMETRIUS, THESSALONICA. THE CIBORIUM OF ST DEMETRIUS (Reconstruction by Orlandos)

resulted in the sounding of the 'false' alarm that saved the city from a surprise Slav attack. The *Miracula* give two nearly similar descriptions of the ciborium. One of these reads:

> This work, as holy as it is remarkable, stands in the midst of the temple on the left side. It is hexagonal in form, upheld by six columns, with a like number of walls of fine silver, and ornamented with incised work, and its cover stands circular upon the six sides, and supports, as upon a base, a silver sphere, not insignificant in dimensions, upon which run, as it were, stalks of admirable lilies, and above shines forth the sign of life, the adorable cross of our divine Saviour.

(The second description is rendered on page 149.)

As there were no galleries above the parabemata, the roof of which was the same height as that of the inner aisles, the piers and pillars which enclosed them corresponded to those lining the nave, thus giving an impression of loftiness and dignity to these relatively small areas. Vaulting in the crypt below necessitated the raising of the floor of the northern parabemata 0·80 metres above the general level of the church.

Sotiriou's work has rendered possible an architectural reconstruction of the fifth-century basilica, but the greater part of the original decoration of the interior was irretrievably lost during the fire of the seventh century. However, colour was certainly used with effect. The floor was paved with slabs of white marble, but the pillars of the tribelon were of the particularly precious green-veined 'Cipolino' marble imported from Carystos in Euboea. A number of the central columns of the nave were of green Thessalian marble; the remainder and those of the galleries and the colonnades between the inner and outer aisles were of white marble from the Proconnesus quarries in the Marmora. Those enclosing the parabemata were of red Egyptian granite. The magnificent Corinthian capitals of the tribelon bear faint traces of red paint, but it is impossible to say if this work dates from the first or a later period; traces of gilding also appear on one of the Corinthian capitals of the nave. We can go no farther than this with certainty, but mosaics, coloured marble revetting, perhaps wall paintings, curtains between the columns of the nave and galleries must all have made their contributions to a scene of awe-inspiring splendour, intended, we may be sure, to be no less breath-taking than that of the nearby Rotunda of St George.

From the outside the basilica presented a noble and harmoniously balanced appearance (Fig. 58). Its dominating feature was the long, low pitched roof, which ran the length of the nave and bema as far as the chord of the apse. Stepped downwards to either side were the two sloping roofs of the aisles which turned outwards at their eastern ends to follow the lines of the transept. A clever and varied concentration of windows, sometimes asymmetrically grouped, ensured full daylight illumination to every part of the building.

Sotiriou's reconstruction of the fifth-century ground plan indicates that the area and the limits of the transept were primarily governed by the structure and extent of the crypt. The ambulatory between the walls of the transept and the colonnades of the sanctuary was not linked with the aisles except possibly at the north-west corner of the transept, where, unlike the completely new southern transept, an earlier Roman wall, belonging to the baths, extended westwards beyond the

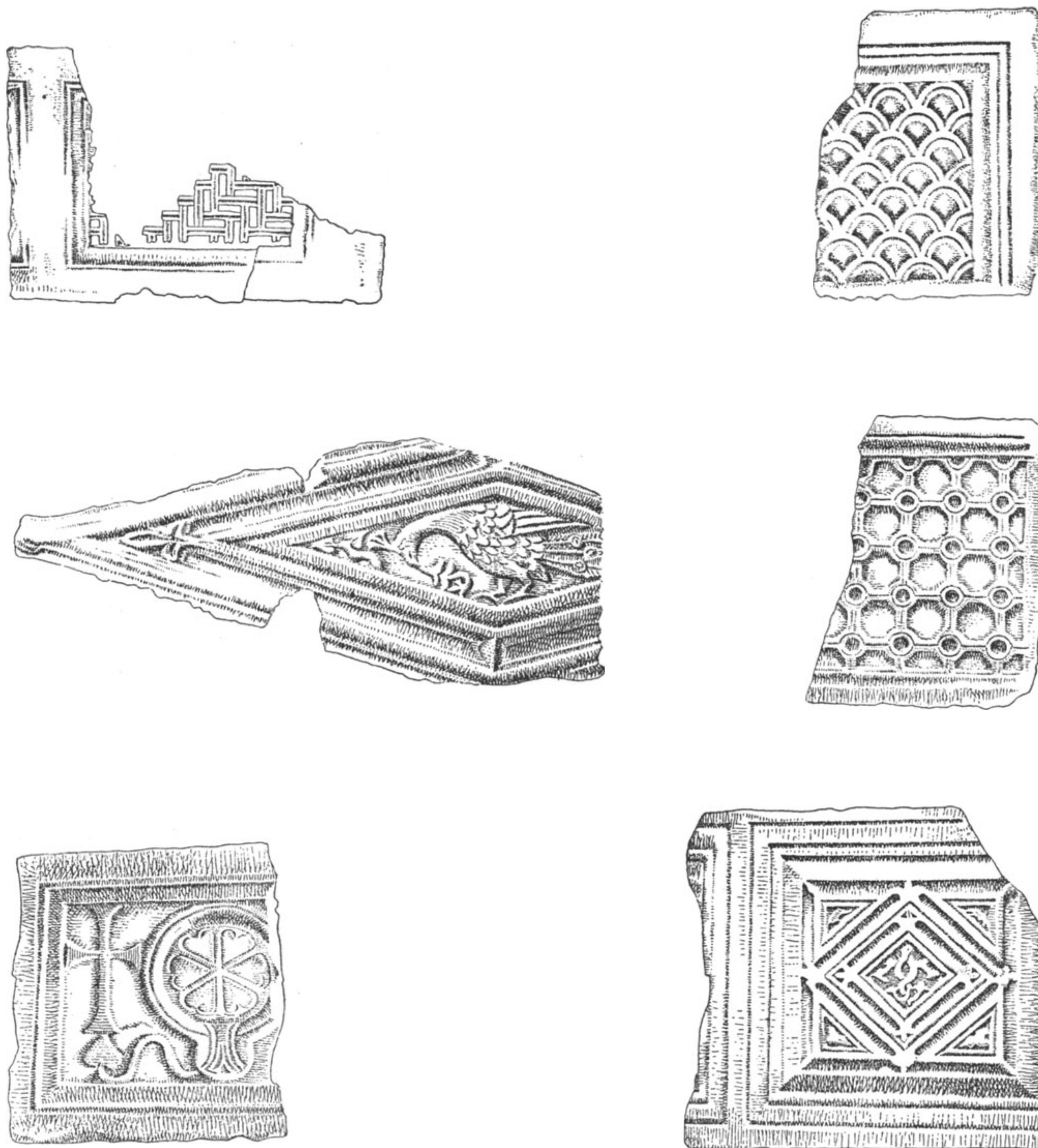


Fig. 63. BASILICA OF ST DEMETRIUS, THESSALONICA. SCULPTURED FRAGMENTS DATING FROM THE FIFTH-CENTURY BUILDING

limits of the sanctuary and provided a porticoed entrance into both the ambulatory and the north aisles. In the present-day church the southern transept wall has been similarly extended westwards, with the effect that both parabemata are now inscribed by extensions of the outer aisles; but Sotiriou's reconstruction makes it quite clear that this was not the case in the original basilica. A glance at the plan of the seventh-century church (Fig. 66) shows that this change was made in the course of rebuilding following the first great fire.

Nevertheless, to whatever degree the transept and the extension east of the apse were connected with the crypt and its martyrological aspects, it is clear that St Demetrius belongs to the category of basilicas in which the increasing ceremonialisation of the late fourth

and fifth centuries — due to the Oriental influences of Persian royal ceremony and the Syro-Mesopotamian liturgy — was met by expanding the sanctuary within a north-south transept.

However, it did not signify the orientalisation of Byzantine Macedonia; other basilicas continued to be built in and around the fifth century which rejected the new Oriental influence completely. Examples include those of Dion, of 'Acheiropoietos' and 'Tumba' in Thessalonica and the Basilica of Bishop Philip at Stobi. Here the bema continued to stretch down the nave between the colonnades while the aisles extended to the east wall.

Although built during the nadir of Roman fortunes and ecclesiastical power, St Demetrius did not lean eastwards to the extent of copying the Syrian form of sanctuary with its apse inscribed between two rectangular lateral chambers. This occurred in Salona, on the Aegean Islands and on the Asia Minor coast, but it failed to secure a foothold on the Greek mainland or the Hellenic regions of Macedonia. Moreover, the evolution of the St Demetrius form of tripartite sanctuary is by no means evidence of the introduction of the Syrian liturgy. To use a modern analogy, it was a High Anglican form, but not Roman Catholic — not forgetting that in the fifth century the champion of the 'Low Church' was the Bishop of Rome. On the other hand, St Demetrius and similarly planned churches were unmistakably precursors of the liturgical revolution through which Antioch was entirely to displace Rome throughout the Byzantine Church. Although neither of the parabemata were designed to have a prothesis function, they foreshadowed its introduction with all the accompanying liturgical, social and political implications.

The Crypt of St Demetrius

Incorporating part of the original structure of the Roman baths in which St Demetrius had been imprisoned and murdered, the crypt of the basilica lies immediately beneath the sanctuary and 'nave transept', the shape and dimensions of which it seems, to a large extent, to have dictated. During the erection of Leontius's basilica in the fifth century the crypt received certain structural additions intended to provide foundations of sufficient strength to bear the weight of the fabric above. One such addition was a series of piers to support the colonnade of the north wing of the sanctuary, but the principal innovation falling within this category was a semicircular arc of massive piers, constructed from ancient materials including many pagan altars, to serve as foundations for the apse. The chord of this arc was a wall, dating from the Roman period, containing three semicircular and two rectangular recesses.

Other alterations of minor architectural significance but connected with the cult of the martyr and which were made at the same time included the division of the crypt into three main sections. In the centre, the arc of piers was enclosed within an ambulatory formed by vaulted porticoes to the north, east and south. A small, single-chamber, basilical construction having an eastern apse lay at the western end of the southern portico. The greater part of this, including the apse, dates to the fifth century. Three openings in the eastern portico provided access from a street or courtyard which was on the same level as the crypt. To the north and south of this central complex were joined two rectangular, vaulted rooms, originally part of the baths, in which a series of recesses mark the sites of graves. Probably these held the sarcophagi or coffins of bishops, who, by virtue of their office and perhaps of the sanctity of their lives, were granted the honour of burial within such sacred precincts.

The apse-like central space, and its surrounding porticoes, was the section specifically concerned with the cult of St Demetrius. Two staircases connected it with the sanctuary. The main flight, starting from the southern side of the bema, descended into the tiny basilica through a doorway at the west end of its north wall and entered the arc of piers at its southernmost point through another doorway near the east end of the same wall. The second staircase led from the north side of the sanctuary, via a landing, into the north portico.

In the course of time the central section of the crypt, particularly that part of it within the arc of piers, underwent a series of changes. The fame of St Demetrius and of his cures attracted increasing

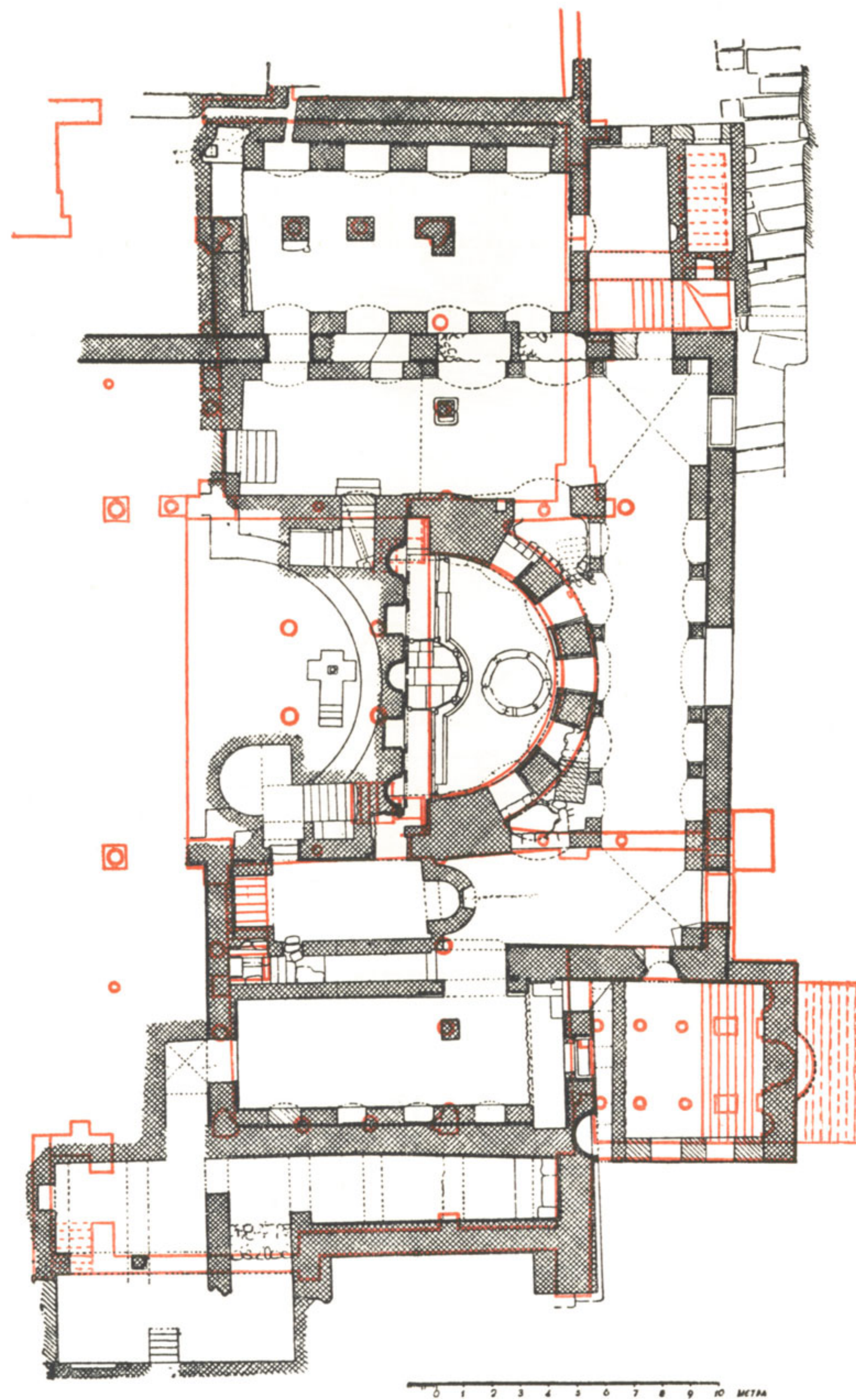


Fig. 64. BASILICA OF ST DEMETRIUS, THESSALONICA. PLAN OF THE CRYPT
The red lines indicate the superstructure

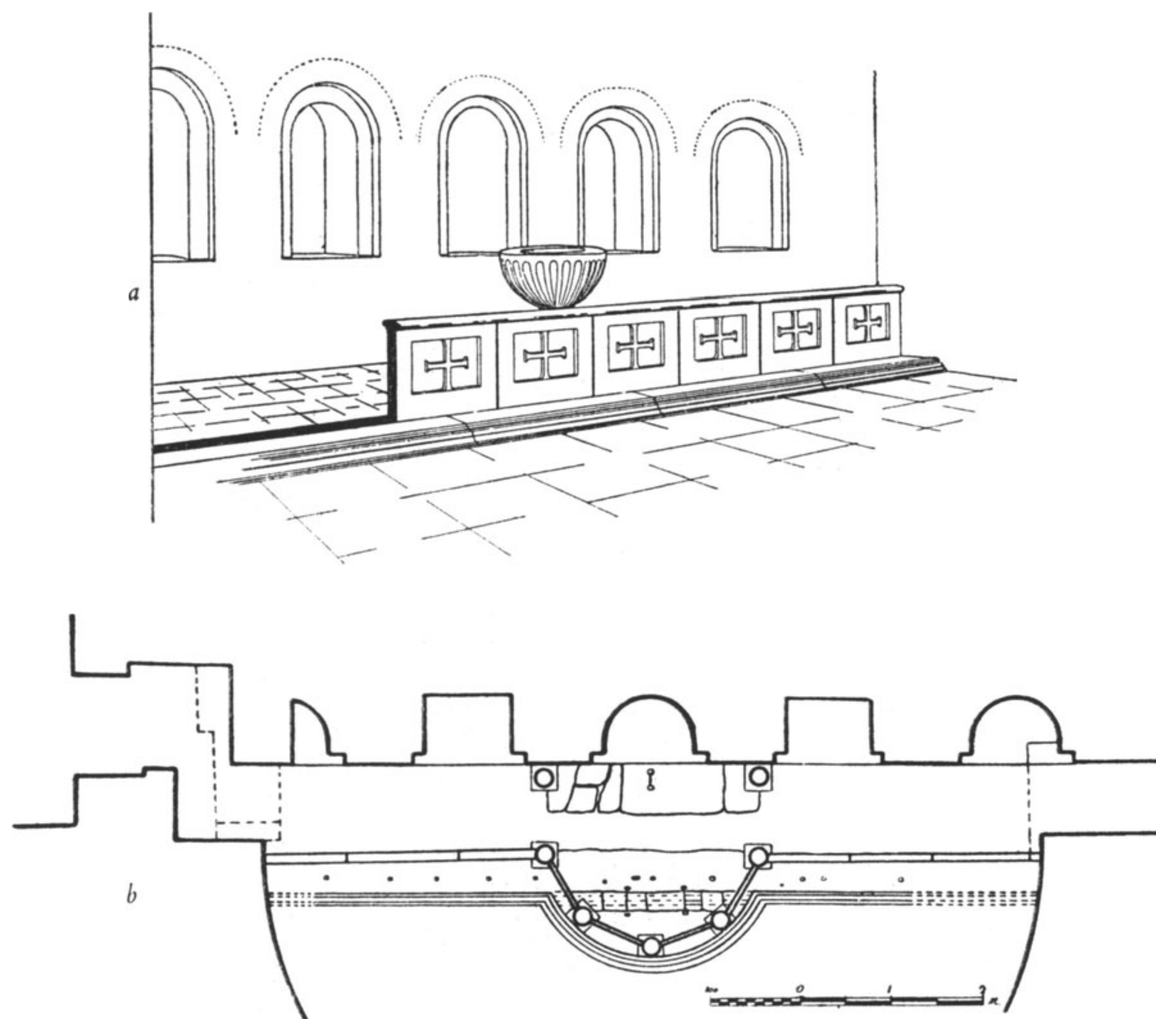


Fig. 65. BASILICA OF ST DEMETRIUS, THESSALONICA
a. The original cult centre in the crypt. *b.* Plan of the cult centre in the crypt altered to accommodate increased numbers of pilgrims. (Reconstruction by Sotiriou)

numbers of pilgrims. Before long the facilities for receiving them must have proved inadequate; but fully as important a motive as this for making changes was the growing emphasis upon ceremonial ritual which was taking place throughout the Byzantine Church.

On the basis of his excavations Sotiriou has divided these changes into three principal phases. In the first, a parapet of marble slabs ran parallel to the chord of the arc. In the centre of this enclosure, which was about 1·30 metres deep, stood a marble fountain or basin containing holy water, which was administered to pilgrims by clergy, who entered the enclosure from the sanctuary through the tiny basilica. (Fig. 65*a*.)

The second phase was marked by the construction of the ciborium, most of which remains to-day (Pl. 26, Fig. 65*b*), although in its original state it was probably provided with a domed roof. Built around the fountain, the ciborium jutted beyond the slabs forming the enclosure, allowing more convenient access to a greater number of people. Further economy of space was effected by moving the parapet on either side of the ciborium to a line slightly nearer the recessed wall. Convenience, however, was probably only a secondary consideration. The ciborium was a symbol of special dignity and it appears likely that the ceremony of giving the holy water to pilgrims had developed into a rite almost analogous to the administration of a sacrament.

The third phase, Sotiriou found, signified changes of even greater ritual significance. The entrance

from the tiny basilica into the enclosure leading to the ciborium was blocked by a wall. The ciborium was floored with concrete, slabs were inserted between the first two pillars on either side and the ciborium itself and the two compartments thus formed on each side of it were converted into three separate pools. Pipes from the ciborium fed both lateral compartments and yet another, circular pool, situated between the ciborium and the arc of piers.

The excavators discovered that the pipe supplying the ciborium with water pierced the recessed wall, after which it turned northwards and ran along the wall to a marble basin placed in the landing on the north staircase. Another pipe, bringing water to this marble basin, was traced to the south wall of the north portico, whence, concealed in the wall, it continued until just beyond the sanctuary, it reached a well, the source of the holy water.

Probably at the same time as the walling-up of the entrance from the tiny basilica into the arc of piers, the entrance from the north portico to the north staircase had been similarly blocked, rendering the marble basin on the landing accessible from the sanctuary only. From this, Sotiriou comments, it is clear that here was secretly made the preparation of perfumed holy water, mention of which appears in the early sources and which tradition — wrongly — alleges to have welled from the hexagonal silver ciborium of St Demetrius in the nave.

During the Turkish domination, when the basilica was converted into a mosque, the crypt and its once famous shrine must have fallen into disuse. The level of the street or courtyard outside gradually rose. Sometime during the eighteenth century the crypt was finally sealed off, not to be rediscovered until the present century.

As Grabar has pointed out, the crypt of St Demetrius was a cult centre, not a martyrium in the strict sense of a repository of sacred relics, for the flask of blood-soaked earth had been placed in the small cruciform reliquary crypt within the sanctuary to which only the clergy had access.[1] On the other hand, as the scene of the martyrdom of St Demetrius, quite apart from the presence of the fountain of holy water, it fulfilled the interpretation of the term as 'a place of witness', an interpretation that was particularly applied in the Holy Land. In spite of this distinction, as we shall discuss in connection with the crypt of the Church of Bishop Philip at Stobi, it appears probable that the plan of the crypt of St Demetrius exerted considerable influence upon the form of later crypt-martyria in Western Europe. This aside, it must be admitted that these excavations, and Sotiriou's skilled examination of the archaeological discoveries, seem to do more to illuminate our ignorance of the cults of the Early Christian Church than fill gaps in our knowledge, although it would be difficult to exaggerate the contribution they have made to our eventual appreciation of them.

[1] A. Grabar, *Martyrium* (Paris, 1946), vol. i, pp. 455–6.

The Rebuilding of the Seventh Century

Documentary sources and architectural evidence agree in indicating that the fire of 1917 followed a very similar course to that of the seventh century. Consequently a common fifth-century foundation and part superstructure formed the basis of both reconstructions.

The careful analysis made by Sotiriou shows that the seventh-century fire destroyed the roof and all the upper parts of the church, including the galleries, which were particularly vulnerable owing to their timber floors and ceilings. The apse was preserved intact, as were the great arches connecting it to the nave colonnades. Some damage was inflicted in the area of the sanctuary but, in addition to the piers and arches, the columns enclosing the south parabema were saved. In the nave and aisles the devastation was severe, the colonnades and their capitals suffering badly. Only the northernmost, its arches decorated with a row of votive mosaics, survived intact until the second fire. The tribelon, much of the wall between the nave and narthex and the two small chambers jutting from the north outer aisle, also escaped damage. Of the outside walls, the greatest destruction occurred on the southern side, and the least to the north transept wall, which was preserved to the height of the upper windows.

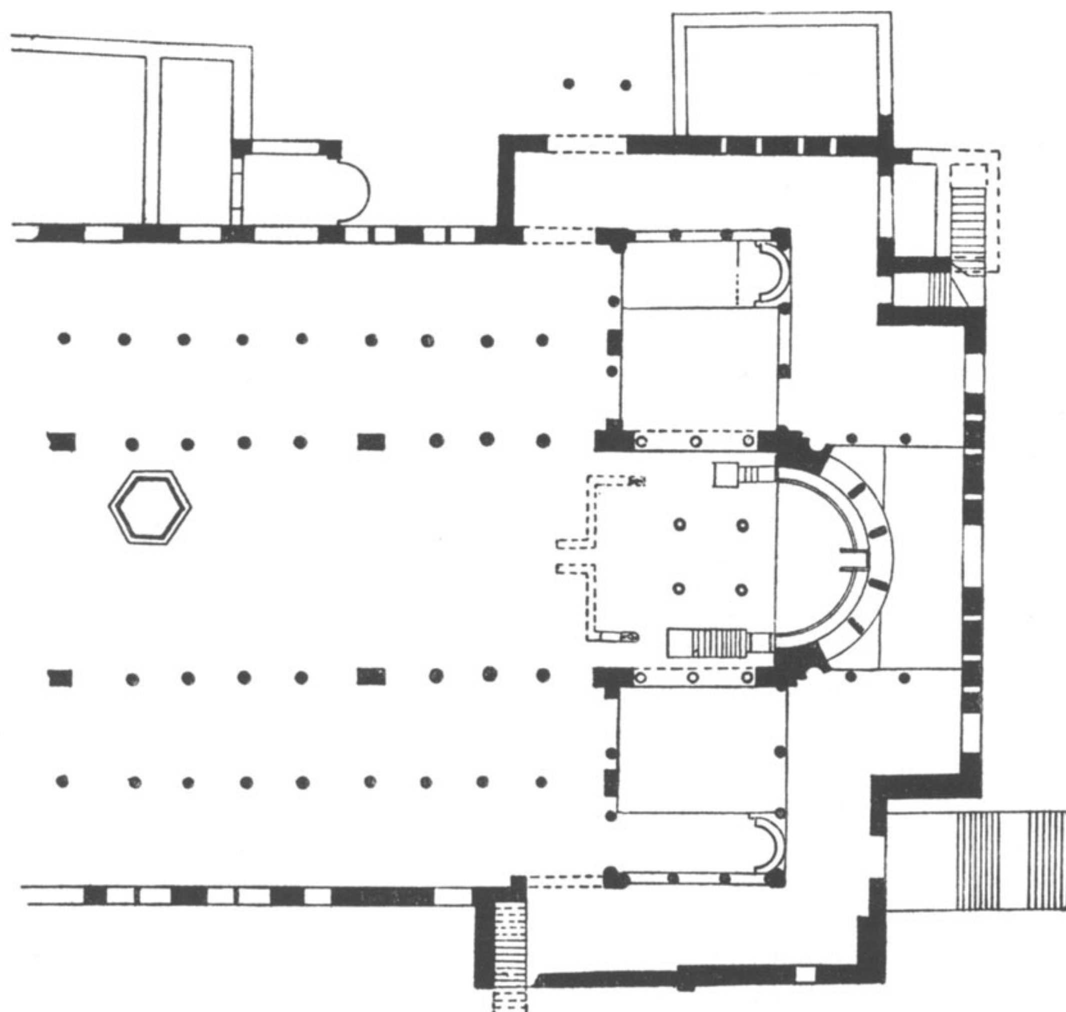


Fig. 66. BASILICA OF ST DEMETRIUS, THESSALONICA
PLAN OF THE SEVENTH-CENTURY REBUILDING. (Reconstruction by Sotiriou)

Haste and improvisation were keynotes of the reconstruction, which, probably in view of the importance of the church to Thessalonian morale, was quickly completed by re-using materials from other buildings. A structural alteration, which had the effect of increasing the capacity of the church, was the insertion of galleries over the outer aisles and around the ambulatories of the transept. The south transept wall was extended a few metres west to correspond with the north transept wall and to provide an entrance to the southern ambulatory from the southern aisles.

Although the transept retained its original height, that of the nave and aisles were all reduced by as much as a metre and a half. The roof of the narthex, on the other hand, was now raised to the new height of the nave in order to avoid dismembering its upper windows

Texier and Pullan, who saw the church a century ago, describe its then internal decoration as

> composed of slabs of marble of different colours ; there are neither mouldings, nor cornices, nor modillions. The entablature of the ground floor is ornamented with marble mosaics, representing modillions, with a decoration of beads, dentils and flowers. The archivolts of the arches of both stories are composed of voussoirs, of marbles of different colours. The piers (of which there are three on each side of the nave) are covered with white marble slabs, and the spandrils between the arches have panels of various colours.[1]

Important changes were made in the sanctuary, the general level of which was raised one or two steps. The presbytery seats were moved from their position flanking the altar to the walls of the apse. In each

[1] C. Texier and R. P. Pullan, *Byzantine Architecture* (London, 1864), p. 128.

of the parabemata two columns were added to the western sides to help carry the new transept galleries. The double columns which had occupied the corner positions were replaced with similarly shaped brick piers and the new columns of the north wing were placed on stylobates. A corresponding low wall was also constructed on the south side of the south wing. Small eastern apses were added to both extremities.

As the liturgical ceremony of the Great Entry had been universally adopted in the Byzantine Church for a full half-century before the rebuilding of St Demetrius, these alterations in the arrangement of the sanctuary were clearly made to conform with its requirements. The fifth-century parabemata had provided the essential tripartite division, but the ceremonial of the Great and Little Entries in a basilica of the size of St Demetrius required a procession from a doorway at the extremity of the sanctuary rather than from one within the width of the nave. It is probably for this reason that the prothesis and diaconicon chambers were so situated.

More than any other part of the church, perhaps, the restoration of the colonnades of the nave reflected the changed conditions of life since the building of the church in the fifth century. Two massive piers occupied the positions of the columns in each row. In other cases damaged columns were replaced from other buildings. They were not always the right size and it was necessary to insert plinths of various heights beneath them. The capitals were a similar hotch-potch. Only a small number had survived the fire, and the seventh-century rebuilders did their best with what they could find from elsewhere, attempting only to match opposing pairs on the two sides of the nave.

This attitude of re-use rather than creating anew was not only due to the haste in which the church was reconstructed. No longer was there easy access to the workshops and quarries of the Proconnesus, and for fully a century the main energies of Thessalonian architects and builders had been concentrated upon fortresses rather than churches. Of all the proud basilicas of Greece and Macedonia that had been contemporary foundations of St Demetrius, few outside Thessalonica remained standing. A Slav king sat enthroned beneath the looted ciborium of the basilica of Corinth, and Chagan, ruler of the Avars, flaunted on his person the liturgical vestments which a Byzantine empress had presented to the great basilica of Nea Anchialos (Thebes). Even in Thessalonica probably any other church than that of St Demetrius, the city's divine protector and never failing saviour, would have been left in ruins.

The Capitals of St Demetrius (Pls. 27, 28)

A great deal of scholarly attention has been lavished upon the capitals of St Demetrius, particularly in relation to their dating. For specialised treatments of the subject Sotiriou's work on St Demetrius and Kautsch's study of capitals generally must be consulted.[1] A full discussion on such detailed lines is out

[1] G. and M. Sotiriou, *op. cit.*; R. Kautsch, *Kapitellstudien* (Berlin-Leipzig, 1936).

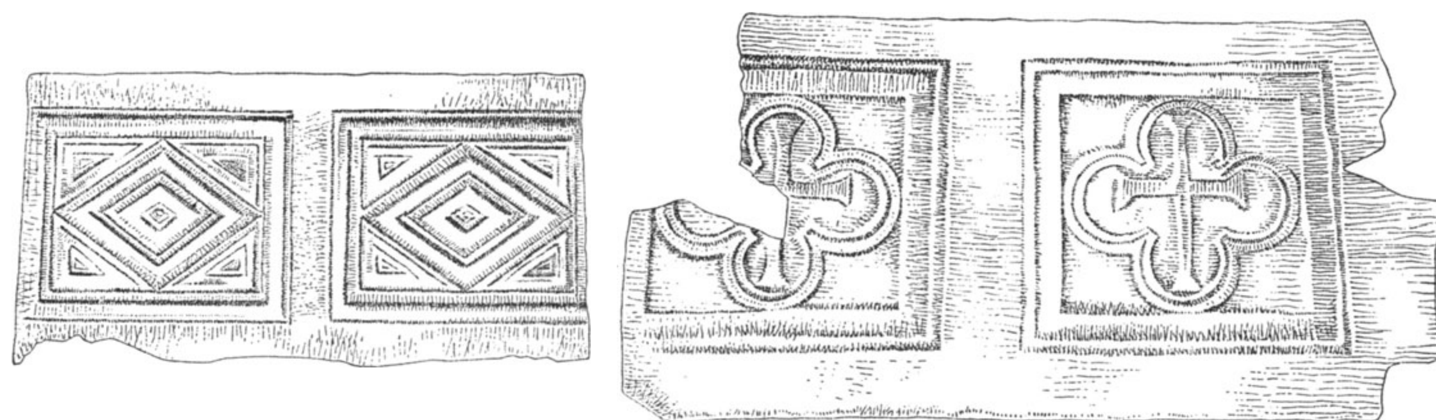


Fig. 67. BASILICA OF ST DEMETRIUS, THESSALONICA. SCULPTURED FRAGMENTS DATING FROM THE SEVENTH-CENTURY REBUILDING

of place here. After the fire of 1917, a careful attempt was made to reproduce the previous forms of the capitals destroyed as exactly as possible. However, because the two fires followed approximately similar courses, most of the original capitals surviving the first still remain *in situ* to-day.

Capitals which with reasonable certainty belong to the fifth-century church are those of the two columns and the two pilasters of the tribelon; the pilaster capital at the western end of the south nave colonnade; the capitals with imposts situated at the points where the eastern colonnades of the parabemata meet the chord of the apse, and those of the windows of the apse. A few also survived from the colonnades of the nave and parabemata.

All of the definitely fifth-century capitals in the nave are variants of the 'Theodosian' acanthus type in which the drill has been used to emphasise the light and shade effect of the acanthus leaves. The two capitals of the tribelon are representative of the classical 'Theodosian' capital, in which two rings of gracefully curving, serrated acanthus leaves rise from a crown of smaller, obliquely inclining leaves. Midway between the volutes a band of alternately erect and inclining leaves encloses a cross. Some of the nave capitals and those of the north wing of the bema are closely similar, although the latter have also intricately and finely carved imposts. Nearly related, too, are the capitals of the demi-columns where the colonnades of the parabemata join the chord of the apse. These, also, have carved imposts. As usual, in the apse windows the capitals are of a more simple type. Here carved, spiky, stylised leaves are inscribed within borders.

The pilaster capitals of the tribelon and of the western end of the southern nave colonnade are of particular beauty and delicacy. In the former the bust of a winged animal, in one case a lion and in the other a calf, emerges from a fringe of tiny acanthus leaves. The bust is flanked by two large, gracefully curving acanthus leaves carrying volutes and below are three more, similar in size and type, standing upon a line of smaller inclining leaves. In the latter, the principal of its three faces displays two pairs of peacocks drinking from a cantharus out of which grows a vine. This work is exceptionally graceful, the peacocks express life and movement and even such details as the ripples of their feathers and the patterns of their tails have survived to the present day. The four birds stand, framed among leaves, upon curved serrated acanthus leaves, which have been finely worked with a drill. Above them is an upper band of acanthus leaves, not drilled but of the fleshy, spiky type; this band runs on all three sides of the capital. On the south face the lower zone consists of a purely formal design of acanthus leaves and spiral pseudo-volutes. On the north face, that is to say, the side facing the nave, there appear two birds in a vine bearing grapes.

Likewise fifth century, sometimes re-used from other demolished buildings but in many cases probably belonging to the original basilica, are a variety of other capitals. They include two Theodosian capitals standing on green columns in the southern nave colonnade. Although of a similar type to the others, Sotiriou considers these sufficiently different and inferior in execution to have belonged to some other, though more or less contemporary structure.

The capitals in the large western triple window of the narthex are also contemporary. A common fifth-century type, they consist of two registers of four fleshy acanthus leaves, separated in the top row where the tips occupy the place of volutes, but touching in the lower. Sotiriou regards these as probably originally belonging to some other part of Leontius's basilica.

Also within this category are the animal and bird capitals in the nave, where rams or eagles rise from behind a row of 'Theodosian' acanthus leaves and substitute for volutes. Such capitals, using either birds or animals, had a lengthy pedigree. Fourth-century B.C. Achaemenian Persian examples were in use at Susa and Persepolis. In first century A.D. Rome they are represented in the temples of Concordia and Mars Ultor. They are found in Pompeii. Dalton describes the tradition as 'common in the Hellenistic world, and in the country of its origin (it) was continued in the sculpture of the later (Sassanian) monarchy. It was through Hellenistic channels that the fashion spread to East Christian art, and its popularity helped sculpture in the round to survive on capitals later than elsewhere.'[1] The St Demetrius examples are some of the first appearances of this form of capital in Byzantine sculpture. Slightly later, in 447, it was used in the

[1] O. M. Dalton, *East Christian Art* (Oxford, 1925), p. 196.

Golden Gate of Constantinople. Thereafter, until the end of the century, it was common in all parts of the Byzantine Empire.

Sotiriou considers that all but one of these capitals are probably from the original church, basing his conclusions mainly upon the general type and the execution of the acanthus leaves. The exception is a ram capital. This, though similar in detail to the others, is appreciably smaller.

Of later date than Leontius's basilica is the late fifth- or perhaps early sixth-century example which has the 'wind blown' acanthus as its decoration. Here two rows of acanthus leaves turn in opposite directions, presenting a contrast to the contemporary, single direction 'wind blown' form similarly re-used in the later Thessalonian church of Aghia Sophia. Found at Kalat Siman in Syria in the second half of the fifth century and in Ravenna until midway through the sixth, the 'wind blown' acanthus form achieved a considerable popularity during this period.

The seventh-century reconstructors of St Demetrius also introduced two types of capital which can be assigned to the sixth century. The first of these was a bird capital in which eagles stand upon a quite separate lower register of geometrically formalised acanthus leaves, a purely Byzantine development from the earlier and traditional form. The new capital became generally current in the sixth century, when it ousted its traditional prototype in popular favour, and was frequently found with a basket-work design in the lower panel. The second type of sixth-century capital is a fluted or lobe-shaped example decorated with stylised, symmetrical and lace-like foliate patterns, carved in sharp relief to accentuate the effect of light and shade. Those re-used in St Demetrius probably belong to the early sixth century. They are a little heavy and the formalisation is uneven. They foreshadow, but are still some distance from the superb examples that were to appear later in the century in SS. Sergius and Bacchus and Aghia Sophia in Constantinople and in S. Vitale in Ravenna.

The Mosaics of St Demetrius (Pl. 29-34).

If a generally agreed classification and dating of the decorative sculpture of St Demetrius has been achieved, the same cannot be said for the mosaics, which are still to-day as fruitful a field for expert disagreement as exists anywhere in Christian art.[1] There is reason enough for this. An important series of panels, discovered on the northern arcades of the northern inner aisle in 1907, perished in the fire of 1917, while it was only in the course of the restoration work following this fire that several others were uncovered. Consequently, apart from whatever examples suffered destruction prior to this century, and of which there is no record at all, no one has even had the opportunity of studying together all that are known to have existed in our own time. Photographs were taken of those lost in 1917; but, valuable as these are, they are sadly inadequate beside the splendid originals which can still be seen in the church to-day.

The exceptional, indeed, unique relationship which existed between St Demetrius and his city adds to the difficulties of classification, for, as far as is known, the mosaics are not paralleled in any contemporary church. The devotion which the grateful Thessalonians rendered to their great protector and healer made his church a cult centre in many ways analogous to the pagan temples of an earlier era. In the context of Thessalonica's history it was natural for citizens either wishing to express gratitude to or to request favours from the saint to erect in it votive mosaics — the up-to-date and Christian version of the votive stele of pagan times. Such a practice was by no means confined to Thessalonica. From the fourth century onwards, it had been gaining in popularity throughout Christendom, particularly in those parts possessing a strong Hellenistic legacy of culture. On the other hand, it had aroused opposition, equally deeply seated and

[1] Principal works of reference on the subject are: C. Diehl and M. le Tourneau, *Monuments et mémoires*, vol. xviii (Paris, 1910). C. Diehl, M. le Tourneau and H. Saladin, *Les Monuments chrétiens de Salonique* (Paris, 1918). C. Diehl, *Manuel d'art byzantin* (2nd ed.), (Paris, 1935). M. van Berchem and E. Clouzot, *Mosaïques chrétiennes* (Geneva, 1924). V. N. Lazarev, *History of Byzantine Art* (Moscow, 1947) (Russian). G. and M. Sotiriou, *op. cit.* T. Uspensky, *Some Mosaics of St Demetrius of Salonika*, vol. xiv, *Izvestija Russkogo Archeologicheskogo Instituta v Konstantinopolje* (Leipzig, 1909) (Russian). O. Tafrali, 'Sur la date de l'église et des mosaïques de Saint-Démétrius de Salonique', *Revue Archéologique* (Paris, 1909). A. Xyngopoulos, Η ΒΑΣΙΛΙΚΗ ΑΓΙΟΥ ΔΗΜΗΤΡΙΟΥ ΘΕΣΣΑΛΟΝΙΚΗΣ (Thessalonica, 1946). A. Grabar, *Martyrium*, vol. ii (Paris, 1946), p. 87 *et seq.* E. Kitzinger, Byzantine Art in the Period between Justinian and Iconoclasm. *Berichte zum XI. Internationalen Byzantinisten-Kongress, München, 1958* (Munich, 1958).

vigorous, which stemmed mainly from Semitic and Anatolian regions. In the eighth century the controversy culminated in the iconoclastic revolution, which gained the upper hand in the Byzantine Empire from 726 to 843 and permanent sway in Islam (with the exception of Persia) from 745. St Demetrius in Thessalonica must certainly have been one of the strongest of all Christian cult centres; but, particularly in Greece, many of the other important basilicas would have had similar potentialities. Most of these basilicas, however, were destroyed during the various invasions of the sixth and seventh centuries. As we have seen, during this time not only did St Demetrius give his wards good reasons for erecting appropriate expressions of gratitude, but, by preserving his city, he also ensured the survival of his church and its mosaic decoration — except for the damage caused in the unfortunate fire of the early seventh century. In turn, and doubtless with the saint's aid, the citizens retained their votive images during the iconoclastic period, a feat that was almost comparable with the physical survival of the city. Possibly no iconoclast emperor felt powerful enough to order the destruction of the icons of St Demetrius; for icons, that is to say, cult images clearly identified with the saint, these mosaics were.

Though the iconoclasts did not destroy the icons of St Demetrius they seem to have been able here, as elsewhere, to forbid or discourage the erection of new ones. Throughout the Byzantine dominions monumental figural art was halted for nearly a hundred and twenty years. When it restarted in the mid-ninth century, in matters of technique it was obliged to begin at the point where it had left off in the first half of the eighth. Thus very little difference may be apparent between mosaics erected immediately before and immediately after the iconoclastic period. This bridging of the iconoclastic gap is especially noticeable in areas where Hellenistic culture was inherent or had continued to be dominant, for the defeat of the iconoclasts was followed by a general Hellenistic revival in the Byzantine court and capital. In such circumstances, therefore, technique cannot always be an infallible guide to dating.

Moreover, in St Demetrius the various mosaic panels followed no set scheme. They were votive icons, erected by individuals whose principal qualification was probably in most cases an ability to afford a substantial contribution towards the rebuilding or other expenses of the church as well as to commission a suitable artist. In consequence, the panels were not the work of, or even carried out under the supervision of, a single artist.

It will be seen from these notes that any attempt at an analysis of the mosaics is more than usually subject to error. Consequently, any conclusions drawn need to be regarded with reserve. In the following study we shall consider the panels (omitting one or two which are very badly damaged) under the following heads:

A. St Demetrius and the Angels (Fragment).
B. St Demetrius with a Woman and Child (Fragment).
C. The Various Scenes on the Arcades of the North Inner Aisle belonging to the period prior to the Seventh-Century Fire (destroyed in 1917).
D. The Post Seventh-Century Fire Medallions of the North Inner Aisle (destroyed in 1917).
E. St Demetrius and the Builders.
F. St Demetrius and a Deacon.
G. St Demetrius and Two Children.
St Sergius.
H. The Virgin and St Theodore.
I. St Demetrius and Four Ecclesiastics.

A. St Demetrius and the Angels (Fragment) (Pl. IV)

This mosaic, of which only the top left-hand corner remains, is placed on the west wall of the inner north aisle immediately below the gallery.

A saint who, from his general appearance, we can unhesitatingly assume to be St Demetrius, stands on the left-hand side. He is dressed in a chlamys and has a deep golden halo. Only the upper part of his body remains. Emerging from delicately tinted clouds above him and to his right is an angel, with outspread wings and a golden, though smaller halo, blowing a long slim trumpet. The wing of a second angel can be seen to the right but the remaining part of the scene has been lost. While the attempt at realistic portrayal of the clouds appears a little naïve and crowded, the colouring is delicate and charmingly restrained. Against the silver clouds, edged with gently fading pale greens and pale gold, the richness of St Demetrius's chlamys, the golden haloes, the deeper colouring of the



FRAGMENT OF A MOSAIC PANEL

ST DEMETRIUS AND THE ANGELS



FRAGMENT OF A MOSAIC PANEL

ST DEMETRIUS WITH A WOMAN AND CHILD

IV BASILICA OF ST DEMETRIUS, THESSALONICA

angels' wings and robes all gleam with brilliant effect. The two heads are delicately modelled. St Demetrius has a rapt and attentive expression; that of the angel is tender and compassionate.

The scene is unique among representations of St Demetrius. It is difficult to be certain what proportion this fragment is of the original area of the mosaic, but the position of the saint on the edge of the composition is probably an indication that he appeared more than once. Possibly the whole panel originally included the scene of his martyrdom. The subject of the surviving piece may be his apotheosis.

The tesserae used in this mosaic are in general rather large. They are all shapes and are not particularly carefully fitted together. The haloes are formed of horizontally laid tesserae.

Sotiriou considers this scene to have been part of the original decoration of the church and, on all grounds, a fifth-century date appears appropriate. On this assumption, it presents an interesting contrast with the end fourth-century art of the capital, represented in Thessalonica by the dome mosaics of the Rotunda of St George, and with the stylised soffits of 'Acheiropoietos' (*circa* 431–50). The naturalness of the faces and the restraint of the colouring are indicative of a Greek artist, perhaps a local one.

B. St Demetrius with a Woman and Child (Fragment) (Pl. IV)

This panel occupies a corresponding position in the inner south aisle to the St Demetrius and the Angels mosaic on the other side of the nave. Again only part of the original scene remains.

St Demetrius stands in an attitude of prayer in front of a silver ciborium. On the right, against a landscape background, stand a woman and child. To the left of the saint legs and folds of garments belonging to another child are visible, from which it may be inferred that the original panel was a symmetrically balanced composition in which two mothers were portrayed in the act of dedicating their children to the saint.

This panel has an atmosphere and a beauty completely different from any of the others in the church to-day, but which compares with one destroyed in the fire of 1917 where the Virgin is shown receiving a child. St Demetrius stands on a low step in the foreground dressed in a plain gold chlamys with a purple or dark-blue tablion, a square patch of cloth signifying high rank. His hands are raised in prayer. His face, while flatter than in the previous panel, is yet modelled with a semblance of naturalness; but it possesses an other-worldly expression akin to those of the martyr saints in the Rotunda of St George. The presentation of the saint is hierarchic. He is considerably taller and larger than the woman. There is the Byzantine accentuation of the height of the body in relation to the small head. Most striking of all, perhaps, are the hands, which are large — very large in comparison with the head and the dainty feet — and golden.

The ciborium behind the saint is a hexagon formed of silver spiral columns supporting arches upon which a silver roof rises to a point. Behind the saint's shoulders reddish-brown screens with 'fish scale' decoration can be seen in the arched spaces. Probably this is intended to represent the famous silver ciborium of St Demetrius, the catching alight of which caused the Prefect of Dacia to sound the 'false' alarm, and save the city from the Avar and Slav attack of about 581.

The mother and child are both shown bending slightly forward, their hands enclosed within their phelonia in an attitude of dedication, an attitude which appears frequently in later periods of Byzantine art in scenes of the Communions of the Angels and the Apostles. The schematically indicated folds of their phelonia, firmly avoiding any attempt at realism, convey an impression of movement that is spiritual rather than physical. A pillar, upon which stands a golden vessel (perhaps representing the vessel containing earth soaked with the saint's blood), is behind the mother at the extreme edge of the composition and adds both to its balance and to its sense of depth. In the background a mountainous scene is depicted in flat shades of yellow and green. It is bare except for stylised trees, the foliage of which spreads in three tiers in a manner exactly similar to the apex of a Buddhist stupa. The trees also incline as if to reflect the spiritual movement of the mother and child towards the saint.

The tesserae are brilliantly utilised, not only to indicate form and colour but to present the composition in a series of planes. Unless arranged to give

modulation to the phelonia of the mother and child and to produce a slight effect of contour and depth in the landscape, their regular, horizontal placement stresses the effect of the strong, vertical or near vertical lines which are an emphatic feature of the panel. St Demetrius, hierarchically standing in the foreground, dominates the composition with a tremendous impression of spiritual power. He steps forward in the direction of the onlooker in the same insubstantial manner that the mother and child approach him. His chlamys, like his halo, is indicated flatly by horizontal rows of tesserae; it hangs upon a disembodied frame. Only the head, with its calm, all-seeing eyes, and the large, golden hands — of the protector and the healer — raised in prayer, have substance.

This panel is the work of a great artist. As Diehl has pointed out, it is closely related to the lost panels of the north aisle and it must be considered together with them. Nevertheless, on its own evidence we must also admit a possible Alexandrian or Egyptian influence, particularly with regard to the landscape details, the outstanding features of which are the pillar with the vase and the three-tiered tree. Alexandria's connections with India and the influence of Buddhism upon Egyptian monasticism have been discussed in Chapter I. In view of these links, the adoption of such a convention as a three-tiered tree to indicate a background and general atmosphere of holiness is easily feasible.

Whether the artist was an Alexandrian, or whether we may regard this mosaic as evidence of a strong Alexandrian cultural influence in Thessalonica at the time of its erection is more difficult to judge. The Hellenistic restraint and Alexandrian detail could be adduced in support of either contention. As we have seen, Thessalonica and Alexandria were closely linked in ecclesiastical matters and, while this may have been largely based upon a common antagonism towards Constantinople, cultural ties were an obvious consequence. Such ties are reflected again in the legend of Senoufias in connection with the church of Hosios David and in the foundation of the now entirely destroyed early Byzantine church of St Menas.

The old ecclesiastical alliance between Thessalonica and Alexandria may have caused an increasing number of Christians from Egypt to look to the Macedonian capital for refuge during the sixth and seventh centuries. At this time Egypt was steadily becoming more and more impoverished. Not only was its trade falling away, internal strife and foreign invasions were taking a heavy toll of the country's prosperity. During the reign of Justinian it was temporarily occupied by the Persian army. Finally it fell to the Arabs in 640. Thus incentive enough existed long before this last date for Egyptian Christians to emigrate to Thessalonica, and prior to the Arab conquest communications must certainly have been a great deal easier than afterwards.

As far as the date of this panel is concerned, in style and theme alike, it appears to fall between the St Demetrius and the Angels fragment and the panel of St Demetrius with the Builders, that is to say, the latter half of the fifth or sometime during the sixth century.

C. The Various Scenes on the Arcades of the North Inner Aisle belonging to the Period Prior to the Seventh-Century Fire (destroyed in 1917) (Pls. 29-31)

The mosaics of the north inner aisle fall into two main groups. The earlier are a series of votive panels, either commemorating miracles wrought by St Demetrius or expressing thanks to him for his intercession. The later comprise four commemorative medallions subsequently inserted into the earlier group, but having no connection with them. In addition, a number of purely decorative mosaics occupied the soffits of the arcades. These are described by Diehl as of a classical nature, similar to those of 'Acheiropoietos' and representing garlands of foliage and fruit entwined within ribbons of blue and red against a greenish-yellow background. They must be dated to the fifth or sixth centuries.

Probably covered over by the Turks when Sultan Bajazet II (1481–1512) converted St Demetrius into a mosque, after five hundred years these mosaics were again briefly revealed from 1907 to 1917, when they perished in the great conflagration. Unfortunately, in most cases the published water-colour reproductions give a very misleading idea of the beauty of these works, and to supplement the existing meagre black and white photographs, we have only the descriptions which, happily, such experts as Uspensky and Diehl

a. St Demetrius presents a follower to the Virgin, who, seated upon a throne, holds the Christ Child upon her lap and is attended by two angels. St Theodore stands on the right, beyond him an unidentified saint in a medallion. On the extreme left two medallions enclose the busts of two other unidentified saints. (Second Composition)



c. The medallion to the right of St Demetrius, corresponding to that enclosing the deacon on the left, contains the bust of a bishop

b. In the centre of the spandril the Virgin stands between two angels. They introduce to her, on the left, a woman holding a child in her arms and, on the right, a man. On the left is an aedicula, from the pediment of which hangs a crater. (Second episode of the story of Mary). On the right are two of three medallions inserted after to the seventh century rebuilding. From left to right, the figures in the medallions are a deacon and St Demetrius

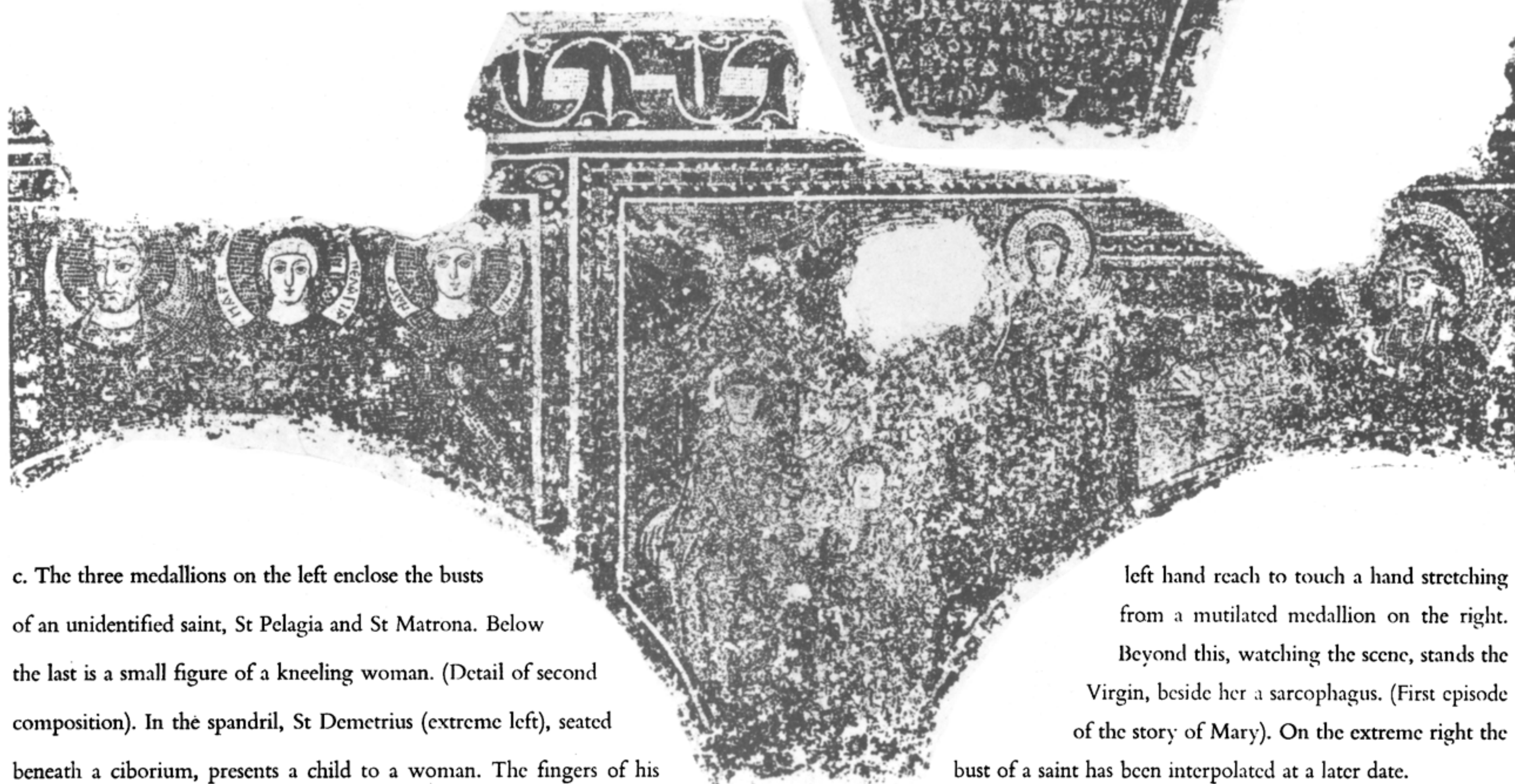


d. The Virgin standing by the sarcophagus. (Detail of the first episode of the story of Mary)

THE DESTROYED MOSAICS OF THE NORTH INNER AISLE

a. Left, an unidentified female saint; right, Christ. (Detail of the fourth episode of the story of Mary)

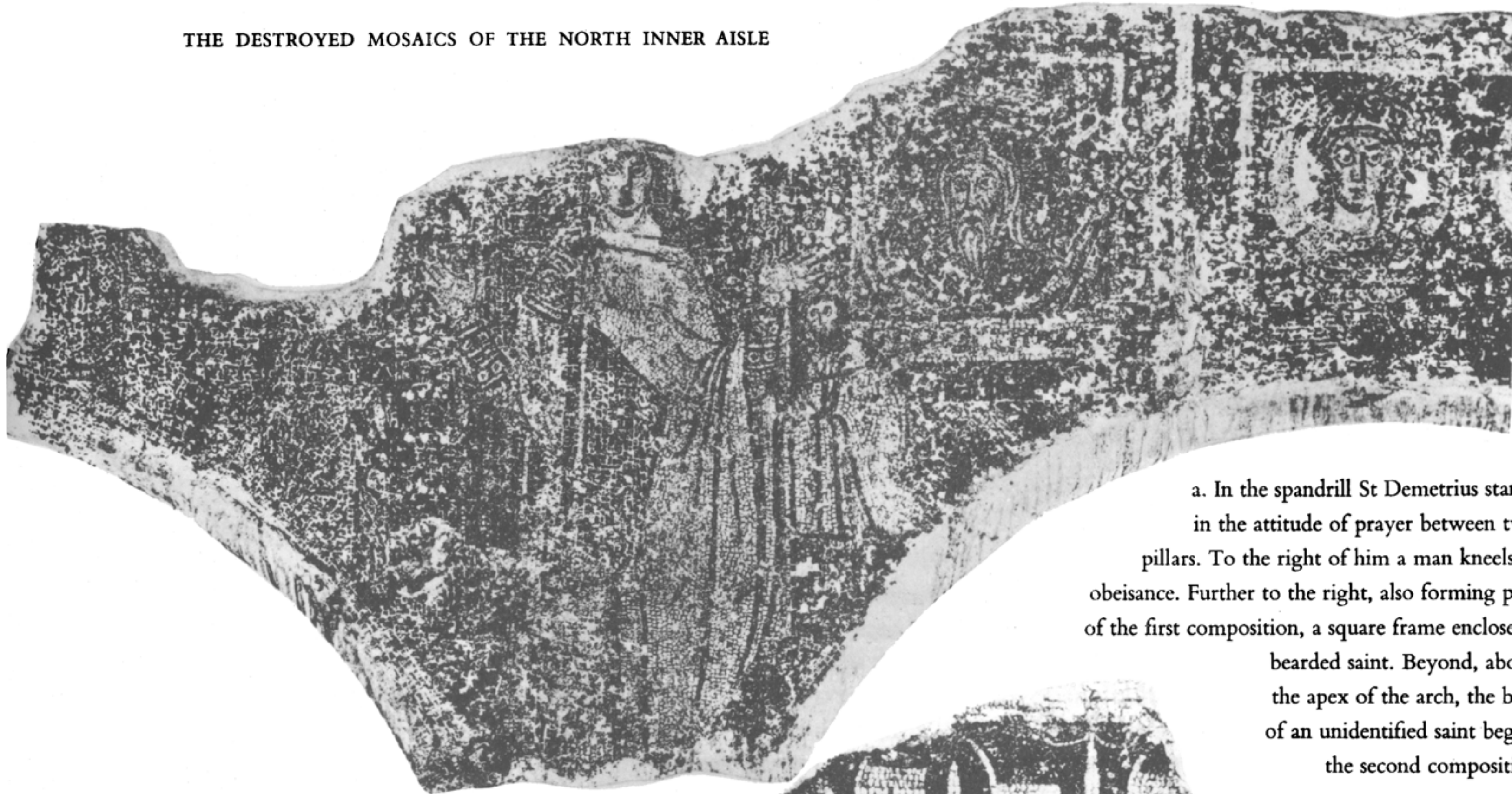
b. Mary, holding in her hand a gift of two doves, is presented by her parents and relatives to St Demetrius. On the extreme left of the photograph a medallion contains the bust of Christ, His hand raised in benediction. To the right of Christ, a ciborium stands on a plinth in the middle of a garden. (Fourth episode of the story of Mary)



c. The three medallions on the left enclose the busts of an unidentified saint, St Pelagia and St Matrona. Below the last is a small figure of a kneeling woman. (Detail of second composition). In the spandril, St Demetrius (extreme left), seated beneath a ciborium, presents a child to a woman. The fingers of his left hand reach to touch a hand stretching from a mutilated medallion on the right. Beyond this, watching the scene, stands the Virgin, beside her a sarcophagus. (First episode of the story of Mary). On the extreme right the bust of a saint has been interpolated at a later date.

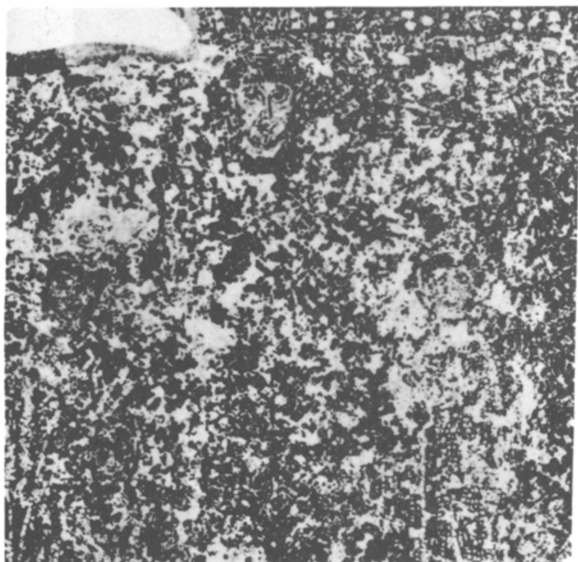
31 BASILICA OF ST DEMETRIUS, THESSALONICA

THE DESTROYED MOSAICS OF THE NORTH INNER AISLE



a. In the spandrill St Demetrius stands in the attitude of prayer between two pillars. To the right of him a man kneels in obeisance. Further to the right, also forming part of the first composition, a square frame encloses a bearded saint. Beyond, above the apex of the arch, the bust of an unidentified saint begins the second composition

b. On the left are landscape details belonging to the fourth episode of the story of Mary. To the right, the fourth composition shows St Demetrius standing in the attitude of prayer before an exedra. Two men and a woman stand beside him and, in the upper corners, medallions enclose busts of SS. Cosmas and Damian



c. Detail of the badly damaged third episode of the story of Mary. St Demetrius stands between two figures beneath an ornamental portico. The figure on the left is the mother of Mary, whose head can be faintly distinguished in the bottom left hand corner

a. St Demetrius and the Builders

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b. St Demetrius and the Deacon

were able to make from their personal observation. The following account is based principally upon their narratives and Uspensky's photographs.

The original panels of the arcades, in so far as they were revealed in 1907, can be divided into four compositions. A mutilated fragment at the western end, identified as St Demetrius with a Founder or a Donor, may represent yet another; but this was too damaged for adequate description.

At the western end, the first recognisable composition shows St Demetrius, as usual dressed in a chlamys. This hangs in natural folds very similar to those in the mosaic in which the saint appears with the mother and child, but without the insubstantial impression achieved by carefully laid, horizontal lines of tesserae. He stands in the attitude of prayer between two pillars, the upper parts of which are destroyed. Above the rising arch of the arcade to the right, a man kneels before him, and, over this man's shoulders, a medallion inscribed within a square frame displays the bust of a bearded saint or prophet whom Diehl suggests is iconographically reminiscent of Zechariah (Pl. 31*a*).

The second composition, within a different border, begins with two medallions within a rectangular field, which is situated over the centre and right-hand side of the arch. The medallions contain the busts of a female and a male saint, neither of whom has been identified. Then, still above the curve of the arch, St Demetrius is shown in the act of presenting a follower, presumably the donor of the panel, to the Virgin. The Virgin is enthroned, in a strictly frontal pose, the Child upon her knee, in the centre of the spandril. On either side of her stand two angels, with fair, wavy hair, silver haloes and dressed in white. They appear to be carrying banners and are turning towards the Virgin. To the right, as the curve of the next arch begins, and in a corresponding position to St Demetrius, there stands another saint, this time with a pointed beard and thin face, his hands raised in the attitude of prayer. He has no identification, but, as far as can be seen, he is of the iconographical type of St Theodore. Farther to the right are three more medallions containing, first, a male and then two female saints, the latter bearing the names of Saints Pelagia and Matrona. Below St Matrona is a small figure of a kneeling woman. Tafrali remarks that Bishop Alexander, probably the prelate who was reputedly responsible for the conversion of Galerius's daughter and who took part in the Council of Nicaea in 325, erected a church off the Via Egnatia on the city's outskirts to be a martyrium for the relics of St Matrona. A monastery, probably built around the site of the martyrium and consecrated to this saint, who was of Thessalonian origin, is mentioned in the *Miracula* as existing in the seventh century [1] (Pls. 29*a*, 30*c*).

The third composition is on a larger scale and is divided into four episodes. The key to it is given by an inscription, which speaks of a child with the name of Mary, who was miraculously given to her parents through the grace of St Demetrius.

The first episode of this story shows St Demetrius seated upon a red-cushioned stool beneath a hexagonal construction with open doors which must surely be his ciborium. He is presenting a young child to a richly dressed woman whose black hair is caught up by a large gold clip. The saint's left hand is stretched out to touch another hand which extends from an almost totally destroyed medallion, presumably originally containing a representation of Christ and placed above the beginning of the curve of the next arch on the right. Farther over the curve of the arch, in a yellow mantle worn over a red tunic, stands the Virgin, her right hand similarly stretched out towards the mother and her left raised as though praying or blessing. Although standing in a position facing a sarcophagus placed in the right-hand foreground, she is turning away from it to watch the scene on the left. Young, human, full of compassion and inexpressibly beautiful, this conception is very different from the stately, enthroned Mother of God of the second composition. We can do no more than guess at the significance of the sarcophagus. Perhaps the couple's first child had died, and Mary, given to them through the grace of St Demetrius and the Virgin, was their second, possibly born after a considerable interval (Pls. 30*c*, 29*d*).

Over the middle of the arch the composition has been interrupted by the later insertion of a bust of a saint with a beard and long black hair. An irregular dark-blue background jars against the soft green of the original, and encroaches both upon the sarcophagus and an aedicula on the other side (Pl. 30*c*).

[1] O. Tafrali, *Topographie de Thessalonique* (Paris, 1913), p. 189.

This aedicula, which appears at the left-hand side of the second episode, has four ornate and bejewelled columns, an entablature and a triangular pediment. A great vase, or crater, recalling but not identical with that depicted in the mosaic of St Demetrius and the Woman and Child, hangs from its ceiling. In the spandril of the arcade the Virgin stands between two angels, who introduce to her, on the left, a woman wearing a gold dress and holding in her arms a child wrapped in a red mantle, and, on the right, a man richly clad in a gold tunic. All wear low red boots, a sign of exalted rank. The woman is obviously she who received her child from the saint in the first episode. The Virgin, again pictured in the act of turning and raising her hands in welcome, is the same human, but dignified Virgin of tenderness and youthful beauty, who appeared beside the sarcophagus (Pl. 29*b*).

Between this and the third episode three medallions, showing St Demetrius and two priests, together with an inscription beneath them, were interpolated at a later period. They have no connection with the story of Mary (Pls. 29*b* and *c*).

The third episode shows St Demetrius standing in front of a portico. He is framed by two gilded pilasters carrying a jewelled architrave. On either side are low colonnades, each of five dark columns. Presumably a cross section of the basilica of St Demetrius is intended; the dark pillars may be a reference to the Thessalian green marble columns of the nave. Inside the building with the saint are, on the left, the woman and child who have already appeared twice, and, on the right, a second woman (or possibly the man — the condition of the mosaic is very poor here), all luxuriously dressed. Below the saint is a damaged and indecipherable inscription. Above the five pillars, to the right, is a medallion with an unidentified female saint (Pls. 30*a*, 31*c*).

The fourth and final episode of this composition illustrates the ceremony of the presentation of Mary to St Demetrius. On the extreme left, above the centre of an arch, is a medallion containing a bust of Christ. Christ is presented frontally, but turning to watch the scene on the right, and the fingers of his right hand, raised in benediction, emerge from the lower edge of the medallion. The saint, the upper part of whose body is unfortunately missing, stands in the centre of the spandril, making a gesture of welcome, apparently similar to that of the Virgin in the second episode, as the mother and father present their child to him. Mary, now, as Diehl observes, old enough to walk, brings the saint a gift of two doves in her hands. Behind the parents are two other women. An inscription below explains the episode, gives the child's name and recalls the benefactions of her patron (Pl. 30*b*).

The remaining undamaged part of the scene consists mainly of landscape details. To the left, in the middle of a garden with trees, there stands, once again, on a high, square plinth, the hexagonal ciborium of St Demetrius with its pointed roof and a low chancel-type screen. To the right, beyond a gap in the mosaic, extends another garden containing trees and a gushing fountain. Diehl suggests that this may either have represented the fountain in the atrium of the basilica, or the Chapel of the Spring, which, according to the *Miracula*, was erected in the saint's honour just outside the city. A small building beside it suggests the latter as the greater probability (Pls. 30*b*, 31*b*).

In the fourth composition, St Demetrius stands in the attitude of prayer in a scalloped apsidal exedra, the arch of which springs from an architrave supported on columns. Three diminutive persons gather around him, one touching his robe and the other two having their hands enveloped in their mantles in an attitude of dedication. Above, in the corners, small medallions frame the busts of two saints, identified by means of fragmentary inscriptions as Saints Cosmas and Damian, both as famed for their devotion to healing as was St Demetrius himself (Pl. 31*b*).

In spirit, in style and in many points of detail, these lost mosaics of the north inner aisle are unquestionably related to the surviving fragment in the south inner aisle showing St Demetrius with the Mother and Child. Like it, they belong to the pre-seventh-century fire period, for the subsequently inserted medallions of the saint and two ecclesiastics can be dated with reasonable certainty to the period of the church's reconstruction. They may not all have been erected simultaneously, but there cannot have been a very great interval between the earliest and the last. Stylistically quite different from, and almost certainly later than the panel depicting St Demetrius and the Flying Angels, they

must all belong to the latter two thirds of the fifth or perhaps to the sixth century.

Yet two aspects stand out from the general air of homogeneity. They are firstly the medallion of Christ, and secondly, the two entirely different portrayals of the Virgin. The Christ, in so far as we can visualise Him from the available photographs, with His rather short beard and the expression of calm, omniscient dignity and profound feeling, belongs equally to the spirit of Constantinopolitan art of the ninth or tenth century.

The enthroned Virgin, with her attendant angels, is essentially an eastern inspiration. Here, without shadow of doubt, is the Theotokos, the Mother of God — Christianity's Great Goddess — presented hierarchically and frontally in a manner identical with the ancient gods of the East, and similarly devoid of human emotions. Like the Virgin and Child on the ambo of St George, it could almost be a copy of the Syrian Virgin on the sixth-century plaque in the British Museum. We find other versions in an icon of Sinai (Hellenised, sixth century ?), in S. Apollinare Nuovo of Ravenna (first quarter of the sixth century), in the cathedral of Poreć (*circa* 550), in the Panaghia Angelokisti of Cyprus, where the Virgin appears standing (late sixth or early seventh century), in the crypt of S. Urbano, Rome (eighth century ?), in the Church of the Dormition at Nicaea (787), in S. Maria-in-Domnica, Rome (817–24), in Aghia Sophia in Thessalonica (*circa* mid-ninth century), in the Gospel of Etchmiadzin (late tenth century), in the Catacomb of S. Eremete, Rome (tenth century ?) and in Aghia Sophia in Constantinople (tenth century). In the West it was still used by Margaritone (*circa* 1216–93) and on a wall-hanging of 1300–50 (Pl. *5g*). In the Byzantine sphere, influenced by Neo-Hellenism, it developed into the 'Hodegetria' (Pointing the Way) Virgin. Although this widespread acceptance of an image that stemmed wholly from Oriental origins is an indication of the successful penetration of Syro-Mesopotamian ideology, it must be noted how the enthroned Virgin of St Demetrius compares with the others in its emphasis of ahuman qualities — in spite of the fact that Thessalonica was essentially a Greek city, while Ravenna and Poreć, two chronologically close examples, were not.

The ahuman presentation of the enthroned Virgin is emphasised by its two neighbouring portrayals of the Virgin standing — firstly beside the sarcophagus and secondly welcoming the parents with their child. In both of these we see a completely Hellenic Mother of Christ, or Goddess, who is able to be glimpsed in half profile and in the act of turning, and whose expression is one of tenderness, compassion and human love.

It is tempting to think that no one artist could have been responsible for presenting the Virgin in two such different aspects. Possibly this was the case, but evidence to this end must be based upon technical points of style alone. The appearance of the enthroned Virgin, taken with Diehl's comments on the decoration of the soffits of the arcades, suggests that these panels may have been erected sometime between 431, the date of the Council of Ephesus which established the Virgin as the Theotokos, and the end of the fifth century. Acceptance of the canons of the Council of Ephesus is clearly indicated. Yet this demonstration of allegiance, in part a political action, in part a reflection of Thessalonica's long-established commercial relations with Syria and Egypt, and in part an instinct inherited from pre-Christian religions, did not automatically imply the discarding of other aspects of the Virgin, which, unconnected with the Theotokos question, were none the less fundamental to Thessalonian religious beliefs. So, beside the Theotokos — or Great Goddess of Asian origins — we see the Goddess of Love, Compassion and Beauty, through whom in earlier stages of their religious development, the Greeks had projected their pre-Christian ideals, using variously such pagan divinities as Pallas Athene, Aphrodite, Artemis and Semele the mother of Dionysus.

Unfortunately lost to us now, these images of the Virgin, the medallion of Christ, and possibly some others unknown to us, remained throughout the iconoclastic period, when so much else was destroyed. The end of iconoclasm in the ninth century, when Byzantine Christians were allowed to erect images once more, was not simply a victory for the monks and the iconodules, it signified the resurgence of Hellenism and the re-establishment of its forces as a counterbalance to those of the Orient in the Byzantine synthesis. Because in much of the Empire the only survivals of

pre-iconoclastic, Hellenic Christian art were illustrated manuscripts, the influence of the Thessalonian mosaics must have been particularly great in the field of monumental art, and they may well have provided some of the inspiration for the post-iconoclastic mosaics of Constantinople.

Had Thessalonica succumbed to the Avar and Slav attacks, as was the fate of almost every other city of the Balkans, it would have been sacked, burnt, and its population slaughtered or scattered. It is difficult to estimate the degree to which such a disaster would have set back the main stream of Byzantine art. Perhaps the effect would have been limited to whatever influence was exerted by Thessalonica upon Constantinople in the immediate post-iconoclastic era. On the other hand, the fall of Thessalonica would undoubtedly have altered the course of mediaeval Balkan art, which, with the rise of the Serbian Nemanja dynasty and the capture of Constantinople by the notorious Fourth Crusade in 1204, tended increasingly to look away from the Byzantine capital and towards Thessalonica and Mount Athos for artistic inspiration and leadership.

Was this the total sum of Thessalonian influence, and of these mosaics in particular? The course of one iconographical theme, the Lamentation, in which the Virgin is depicted as an intensely human mother passionately grieving for her crucified son, a conception as far removed from the Byzantine Theotokos as were the Hellenic Virgins of St Demetrius, may indicate a much more far-reaching influence. Five versions of this theme are known to have existed in the Balkans, one in Thessalonica itself, the remainder within a radius of two hundred and fifty miles of the city, and all portrayed along almost identical lines. All are dated to the period of the twelfth century. They are the now lost wall painting in the Panaghia Halkeon in Thessalonica,[1] those in Anagyriou at Kastoria and at Kurbinovo by Lake Prespa, and the fragment preserved at Bačkovo in Bulgaria. The fifth, and the best known example, is at Nerezi and is dated 1164. In the following century this identical iconographic theme appears again, but in Italy. Here it is used, *circa* 1220, by the Master of St Matthew at Pisa. Around the turn of the century it is repeated by Giotto, in 1295–6 at Assisi and in 1303–5 at Padua. From first to last these scenes express an identical and, for the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, a new spirit — the spirit of Hellenism or of the Renaissance, within this context only the terminology is different. Particularly in view of the existence of a Latin Crusader kingdom of Thessalonica in the first half of the thirteenth century, it is difficult to compare the humanistic Virgins of the Lamentation scenes with those of the destroyed mosaics of St Demetrius without acknowledging the possibility that the latter may well have played some, and perhaps a not unimportant, part in the origins of the Western European Renaissance.

The Virgin has a particularly prominent position in these panels and, as in only one case is she represented as the Theotokos, the decision of the Council of Ephesus cannot have been the sole reason. Moreover, a second great basilica, 'Acheiropoietos', expressly dedicated to her worship stood nearby and in succeeding centuries a great procession passed from here to the Basilica of St Demetrius on the eve of the principal day of the Feast of St Demetrius. Led by the archbishop of Thessalonica and his clergy, it symbolically retrod the saint's road to martyrdom, 'Acheiropoietos' being identified with the place where he had been arrested while teaching.[2]

The lost north aisle panels demonstrate, however, that the Virgin was associated with St Demetrius in an intercessory or votive sense at quite an early date. Uspensky, on the basis of his researches in the *Miracula*, has propounded a theory in support of this, which Diehl, a more rational critic, dismisses, although conceding it to be 'ingenious and subtle'.

Uspensky's theory is based mainly upon a passage in the *Miracula* dealing with a time of dire civil strife during the reign of the Emperor Maurice (582–602). It is recounted that not only were people

> drunk in the public squares on the blood of their neighbours, but they attacked each other in their homes and pitilessly murdered those within, so that they who lived

[1] Drawings of this painting are published in : A. Grabar, *La Peinture religieuse en Bulgarie* (Paris, 1928), p. 59, fig. 13 ; and in A. Xyngopoulos, *Thessalonique et la peinture macédonienne* (Athens, 1955), p. 17, fig. 3.

[2] O. Tafrali, *Thessalonique au XIVe siècle* (Paris, 1913), pp. 140–2; O. Tafrali, *Topographie de Thessalonique* (Paris, 1913), pp. 132–3.

in the upper stories were flung down to the earth — women and children, the old and the young, who because of their weakness could not escape by flight — and (citizens,) like the rough barbarians, plundered friends and relations and burned down their dwellings. In such a situation was Thessalonica. . . .

To make clear to all by whose intercession the city escaped from the jaws of a death that stretched out from Greece to Thessalonica, a dream was given to an honourable man, related to the then prefect of Illyricum who was in the city for the first time and still uninvolved in the questions occupying the community. In his dream he went to the church of St Demetrius.

Entering the church he saw the sacred receptacle and beautiful edifice which stands in the middle of the church on the left-hand side, six-sided in plan with six columns and as many little walls made of tested sheets of silver, with a roof, also six-sided, rising circularly and winding round a vault, and having above a sphere, beneath which in a circle are wonderful patterns from lilies and, on the top, a cross.

Seeing, in his dream, this God-given edifice which we call the holy ciborium, he asked those standing near, 'What is the meaning of this wonderful creation in the middle of the church?' When he learned that this was the shrine of St Demetrius he expressed a desire to go inside it, whereupon he was led to the doorkeeper in front of the silver doors on whom depended admittance to the ciborium.

When the ciborium was opened for him, but before he had entered, he saw in its centre a couch, and at its head a golden throne decorated with precious stones upon which was seated the famous warrior of Christ, Demetrius, as he is portrayed on the icons, and, on another throne, at the foot of the couch and constructed of silver, he saw a woman seated. She had a majestic and beautiful appearance, was sumptuously dressed although without excess, and was gazing attentively at the martyr.

When, in the dream, he was standing inside the ciborium, the woman rose and went towards the door. The Great Martyr, rising with much ardour, took her by the hand, and seated her again upon the throne, saying, 'For the sake of the Lord, do not go out from here, and do not leave the city; thou shouldst never do this, and especially at the present time.' Then the man, deciding not to go farther into the ciborium, bowed and left, asking the doorkeeper, 'Tell me, who is this woman sitting with the martyr?' He replied, 'Then you do not know her? She is known to the whole city, and she is always with our martyr.' 'But I,' said the newcomer, 'am not from here and do not know her. Do not be angry and say her name.'

The doorkeeper answered, 'It is the Lady Evtaxia, whom God a long time ago commended to the warrior himself, and he protects her, not allowing her to go out from here, as thou hast seen.' Upon this, the man awoke.

As Uspensky remarks, this story must have origins deeply rooted in the pre-Christian religions of Thessalonica. A feminine goddess, whether regarded primarily as a divine mother or a divine consort, was an essential part of the Thessalonian and, indeed, Macedonian-Thracian religious tradition. The Cabiri had been the protectors of Thessalonica before St Demetrius had replaced them. A tradition has ascribed to them the saving of the city during the Gothic siege of 269.[1] The Cabiri, it will be recalled, were the attendants of the Samothracian Great Goddess. The bloody sacrifices and Games held in honour of the Cabiri were repudiated by their Christian successor, but the association of St Demetrius with Christianity's Virgin was instinctive. The Lady Evtaxia, however, was probably not directly associated in the popular imagination with the Virgin, as is implied by Uspensky, for the story related above indicates quite clearly that she was, like the city itself, his ward, with perhaps an implication of a spiritual consort. In fact, the admonition of St Demetrius, 'For the sake of the Lord, do not go out from here, and do not leave the city; thou shouldst never do this, and especially at the present time', implies that the Lady Evtaxia was rather regarded as the Tyche or Fortune of the city. In parenthesis it is of interest to note that 'Evtaxia' possesses the meaning of 'discipline' or 'good order', demonstrating on the part of the saint a down-to-earth appreciation of his unruly and impetuous proteges' character as well as a truly Greek capacity for self analysis on the part of the Thessalonians. Nevertheless, during the sixth century and thereabouts the Virgin, in the mind of the populace, must have been steadily assimilating the identity of the Lady Evtaxia, and Uspensky may well have been correct in suggesting that in the north-aisle mosaics this identity was implicit in the portrayal of the two Hellenic Virgins.

1 E. Lucius, *Die Anfänge des Heiligenkults in der christlichen Kirche* (Tübingen, 1904), pp. 223-4.

D. The Medallions of the North Inner Aisle inserted after the Seventh-Century Fire (destroyed in 1917) (Pls. 29*b* and *c*)

Three commemorative medallions were erected on the arcades of the north inner aisle after the reconstruction of the church in the first half of the seventh century. They were inserted between the second and third episodes of the story of the child Mary. Beneath them a panel carried an inscription reading:

ἐπὶ χρόνων Λέοντος ἡβῶντα βλέπεις
καυθέντα τὸ πρὶν τὸν ναὸν Δημητρίου

In the times of Leo you see made young again the church of Demetrius earlier burnt.

The centre medallion, which is placed slightly higher than the other two, contains a bust of St Demetrius. The two on either side are both ecclesiastics, the one on the right of St Demetrius (the spectator's left) is a deacon, the other a bishop. Both appear again on other panels, from which it is clear that they played roles of importance in the rebuilding of the church. The deacon appears on a panel alone with St Demetrius and the bishop is represented on another as one of the church's builders.

The reference to 'the times of Leo' in the inscription has been considered by some authorities to be applicable to one of the Byzantine emperors, either Leo III (717–41), an unlikely candidate in view of his iconoclastic record, or Leo IV (886–912), who is much too late, as, in fact, is also Leo III. These mosaics, and others of approximately the same date, are not likely to be later than the second half of the seventh century and can probably be placed about the middle of it or a decade earlier. The Leo of the inscription, therefore, is now generally considered to have been probably a Prefect of Illyricum or some other high official of whom this, with the possible exception of the next mosaic to be considered, is the only surviving record.

The personalities and significance of the two ecclesiastics will be discussed in connection with the other mosaics in which they appear.

E. St Demetrius and the Builders (Pl. 32)

This panel, which is complete and undamaged, is situated on the north face of the pier at the south-east corner of the nave. By virtue of its relation to the nave and bema, the position was one of great importance. St Demetrius appears standing between two men, one a bishop and the other a secular official. Underneath an inscription reads:

κτίστας θεωρεῖς τοῦ πανενδόξου δόμου ἐκεῖθεν ἔνθεν μάρτυρος Δημητρίου τοῦ βάρβαρον κλύδωνα βαρβάρων στόλω(ν) μετατρέποντος κ(αὶ) πόλιν λυτρουμένου.

You see the builders of this famous house on each side of St Demetrius, who averts the barbarians' terrible naval might and saves the city.

Unlike the mosaics we have been discussing hitherto, St Demetrius here does not occupy the foreground, but stands behind his companions. His chlamys, with its tablion of nobility, is luxuriously decorated with a diamond-shape pattern, and opens on the saint's right side to reveal a no less splendid garment beneath. Yet the frame upon which these hang is even more emphatically incorporeal than in the panel where he appears with the Woman and Child. His arms, which he places around the shoulders of his two companions, leave his chlamys and other garment quite undisturbed. Only the relatively small, ascetic face, with its unsmiling and penetrating eyes, comes to life against the flat background of its golden halo.

This ascetic and insubstantial character of St Demetrius contrasts almost dramatically with the vivid personalities of his companions. Their faces are full of individual and robustly human character and, similarly, their clothes hang in folds that, while formalised, are natural to their stance. The bishop, his rank indicated by the omophorion around his shoulders, has a thick, dark beard and a prominent, hooked nose. In his phelonion-enveloped arms he carries a large Bible and, as befits his rank, his demeanour is dignified and relaxed, but none the less serious, with even a hint of severity. The secular official has obviously an altogether different personality. Wearing a rich tibennion and carrying in one hand his staff of office and in the other either a purse or perhaps a roll containing the law, he stands, alert, tensed and vigorous, as if in the act of giving a command. Neither of the two men gives the slightest hint of being aware of the physical presence of the saint, although both are obviously dominated by and under the protection of his spiritual power, indicated through his action of placing his hands upon their shoulders.

In its technical details as well as in its projection of the spirituality of St Demetrius and the authoritative but very human personalities of his companions, this mosaic is an artistic achievement of a higher order than the famous Justinian and Theodora panels of S. Vitale in Ravenna. For all the richness and delicacy of the colouring, the message conveyed in this mosaic is essentially religious, and a faithful interpretation of the relationship of St Demetrius to those under his protection.

The saint's two companions are so vividly presented as to give the impression of being contemporary portraits. The bishop, in fact, is not difficult to identify. He has appeared before in one of the medallions in the north aisle which were probably erected immediately after the seventh-century reconstruction of the church. It is a reasonable assumption, therefore, to regard him as Bishop John, one of the authors of the first books of the *Miracula S. Demetrii*, a doughty defender of the city against the Avars and Slavs in their attack of 617–19, as well as the bishop whose comment on his predecessor was that he never failed to take an opportunity to re-tell the story of his own glorious role during the Avar siege of 586. This supposition tallies with the inscription beneath the panel which may refer to the naval siege which took place between 617 and 619, and in which the garrison was saved through St Demetrius invoking a storm to wreck the enemy ships.

The secular official is more difficult to identify. Much depends upon whether we are to regard the rectangles framing the two officials' heads as square haloes or part of the battlements of the wall in the background. Opinion is divided upon this point, Uspensky, supported by Van Berchem and Clouzot, taking the former view, Diehl the latter. Sotiriou follows Diehl, but suggests that the implication of haloes was possibly intentional.

The rectangular halo was used to signify a living person. This accords well with the lively expression of the secular official whose face appears quite as much a portrait as that of the bishop, who, if John, was almost certainly alive about the time when the mosaic was erected. On the other hand, powerful arguments can be ranged to support the opposite view. Firstly, the rectangular fields are not only uncommonly mundane in colour, but they are exactly the same tint as the walls and carry a corresponding horizontal line. It is hardly credible that an artist of such subtle brilliance and with every material facility and mosaic technique at his disposal should have represented walls and haloes in an identical manner. Nor would he have hung a substantial cloth over a halo, he would surely have draped it behind as in the mosaics of St Demetrius and the Two Children and of St Sergius. Secondly, the representation of Bishop John in the lost mosaic of the north aisle does not include a square or even a round halo. Square haloes, in fact, are a Roman feature which appear particularly during the eighth and ninth centuries. About the second quarter of the sixth century, in S. Vitale in Ravenna, Justinian and Theodora were given circular golden haloes, as was Justinian in S. Apollinare Nuovo. At this time, a mere ecclesiastical dignitary, his foundation or rebuilding of a church notwithstanding, rated no halo at all, as we see from the portraits of Ecclesius and Maximianus in S. Vitale and Euphrasius and his archdeacon in the cathedral at Poreć.

When the historical circumstances, the Eastern influences which are all prevalent in the art of St Demetrius, and the lost north-aisle portrait of Bishop John are taken into consideration, it seems most unlikely that there was any intention even to suggest the semblance of a halo for these two persons. On the contrary, battlements were most appropriate. Thessalonica at this time was an embattled city and Eusebius and John were not its only bishops who achieved fame as military commanders as well as spiritual leaders.

Who, then, was John's companion on the left-hand side of the saint? While the vividness of the portrait argues a contemporary, the sources leave us in ignorance of suitable candidates, although the fact that Bishop John happened to be the author of the chronicles in question, and was not a writer who tended to stress the reputation of a rival and, particularly one who was a secular official, should not, perhaps, be forgotten. The inscription beneath, which refers to the 'builders', suggests that it may be the Prefect Leontius, the original founder of the church in the fourth century. While proof is entirely lacking, authoritative opinion to-day generally accepts this view as the most probable. The

main argument against, the lively, portrait-like character of the official, loses a great deal of its force in the light of the exceptional ability of the artist. There also exists, however, the possibility that the official may be the Leo of the north-aisle inscription, in whose 'times' the church of St Demetrius was 'made young again'.

In conclusion we may say that historical and stylistic evidence combine to date this mosaic to about the middle of the second quarter of the seventh century. A truly great work of art, it is an invaluable witness to the spirit of its age.

F. St Demetrius and a Deacon (Pl. 32)

This mosaic is on the east face of the south-east pier of the nave, a position which places it at the division between the bema and the diaconicon and where it would not be visible from the nave. It was not discovered until the reconstruction of the church following the fire of 1917.

In its general tone this panel is more subdued than the previous one. St Demetrius wears a greyish-white chlamys decorated with golden markings. His left hand is lifted, not in the attitude of prayer but rather in the gesture of salvation. His right rests on the shoulders of a white-bearded ecclesiastic, who wears a stikarion, a long and sleeved grey gown, with a narrow orarion hanging over his left shoulder to denote his status as a deacon. The ornamental covers of the Bible or Gospels which the deacon carries in his left hand and the gold of his orarion are the only splashes of colour on his attire. Like the two Builders in the neighbouring mosaic, his head is framed against the curtained battlements of the city walls.

Sotiriou has identified this deacon with the one appearing with St Demetrius and Bishop John in the destroyed seventh-century medallions of the north aisle. It is interesting to note that he is also carrying the same holy book. Fortunately, owing to the devoted researches of Tafrali,[1] we know, if not his name, a few details about his life, as well as the reason why he, a simple deacon, was placed at the right hand of the saint in the north aisle while his bishop appeared on the left, and why he is to be seen a second time alone with the saint.

In one of the early manuscripts of the *Miracula*, Tafrali discovered a passage, which recounts how, after the fire had died down, 'one of those whose duties lay in the church of St Demetrius' lamented when he saw it in ruins and reproached the saint for having allowed his sanctuary to burn. That night, St Demetrius appeared to him in a dream and reassured him that the church would soon be fully as beautiful as before. 'The servant of the martyr' then arose and told his dream to his superiors, 'those who were more qualified than he'. But these superiors were seized with doubt. They wondered how, at such a time, it would be possible to restore the church. Where would they find the workmen and the necessary money? However, the saint again intervened, and asked God to inspire 'some souls he knows' so that his home should be given back to his people, as beautiful as before. The plea was answered and, not least among the miracles of St Demetrius, the church was rebuilt.

There can be little doubt that this 'servant of the martyr', in answer to whose grief the saint had appeared in a dream and had even interceded with God, is the deacon twice represented in post-fire mosaics. Indeed, it was a happy chance of an otherwise cruel misfortune that the fire of 1917, which destroyed the seventh-century medallions amongst so much else of irreplaceable value, should have been responsible for the discovery of this panel, in which St Demetrius rests his hand upon the deacon's shoulder. On stylistic as well as historical evidence it must have been erected at the same time or very shortly after the mosaic of St Demetrius and the Builders, though probably by another and less great artist. It is in all respects more humble, but although the presence of St Demetrius is again spiritual rather than physical, a feeling slightly less skilfully conveyed in this mosaic than in the other, the deacon reverently and proudly touches the chlamys of the saint with his right hand, an act which tells us that his beloved martyr had indeed appeared to him in person.

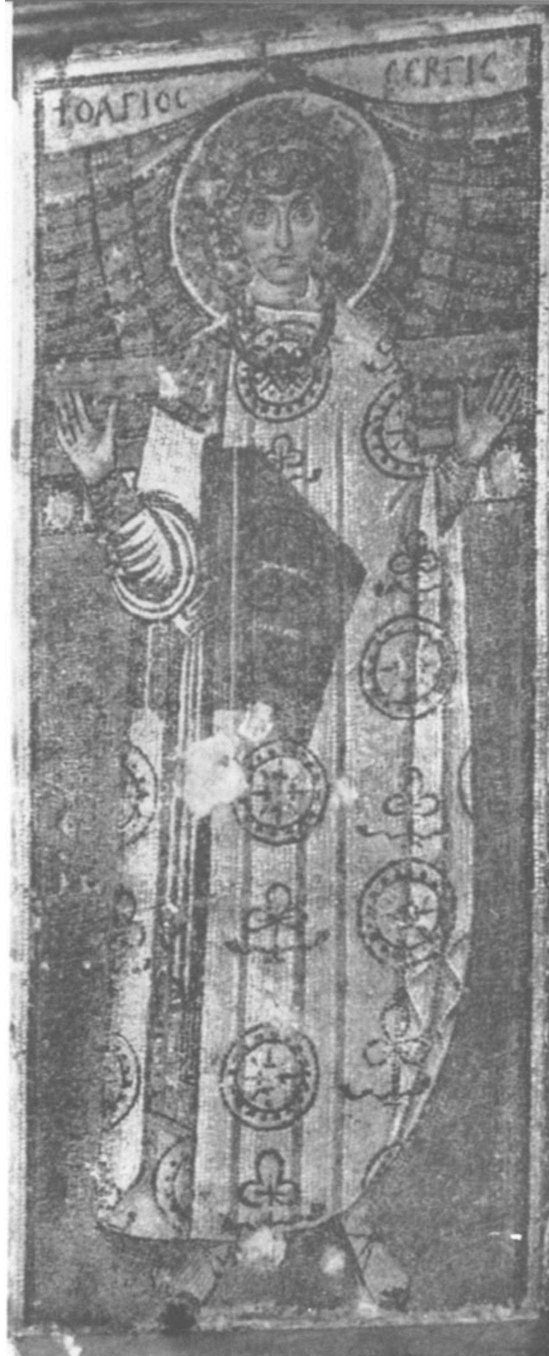
There was nothing vainglorious about the position of this mosaic. Away from the public gaze, it stood in the diaconicon, where the deacon and the others of

[1] O. Tafrali, 'Sur la date de l'église et des mosaïques de Saint-Démétrius de Salonique', *Revue Archéologique* (Paris, 1909), pp. 98–9.

BASILICA OF
ST DEMETRIUS,
THESSALONICA

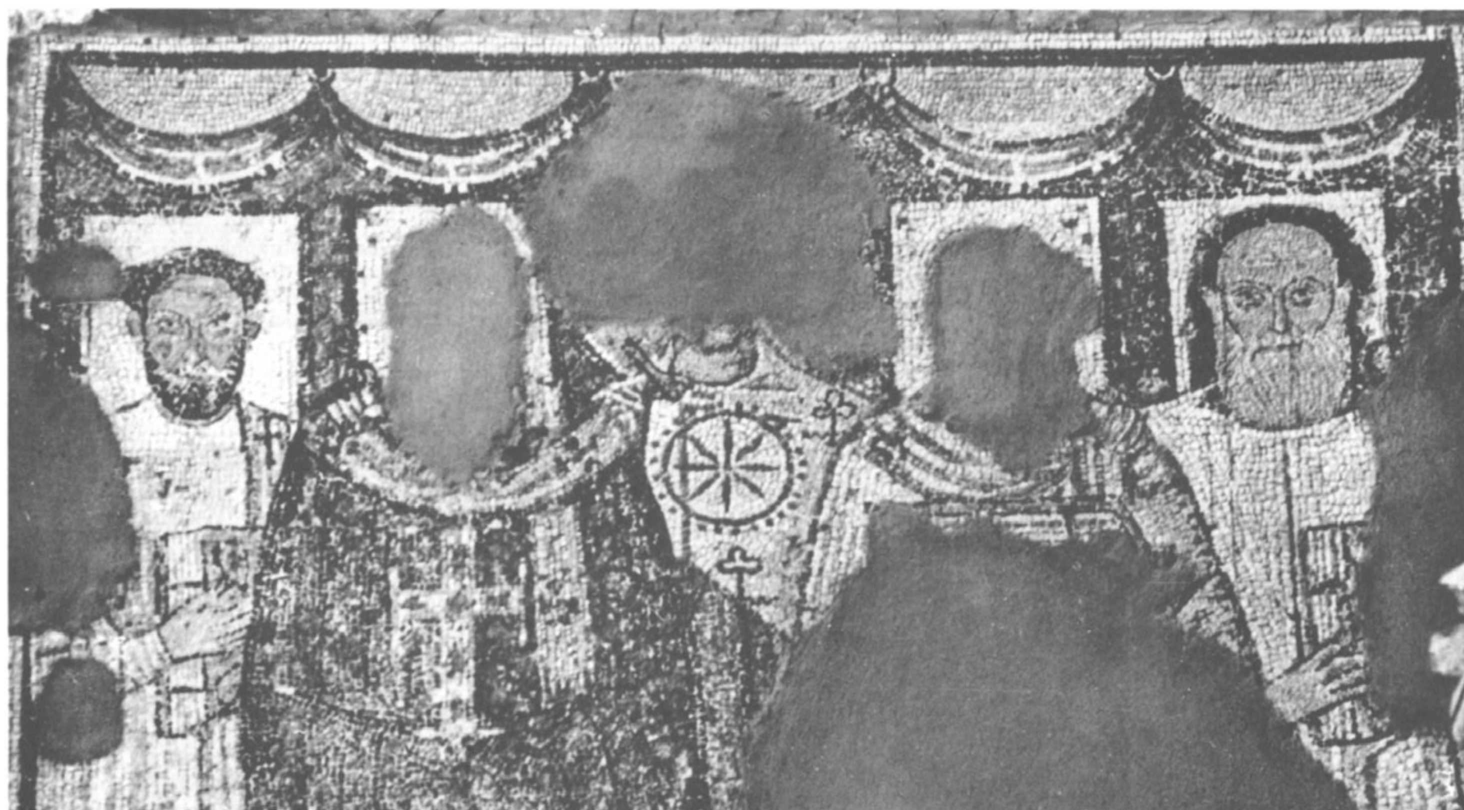


a. St Demetrius and the Children



b. St Sergius

c. St Demetrius and the Four Ecclesiastics





The Virgin and St Theodore

34 BASILICA OF ST DEMETRIUS, THESSALONICA



a. Apse and iconostasis



c. Capital and two soffits of the nave

35 BASILICA OF THE HOLY VIRGIN 'ACHEIROPOIETOS', THESSALONICA

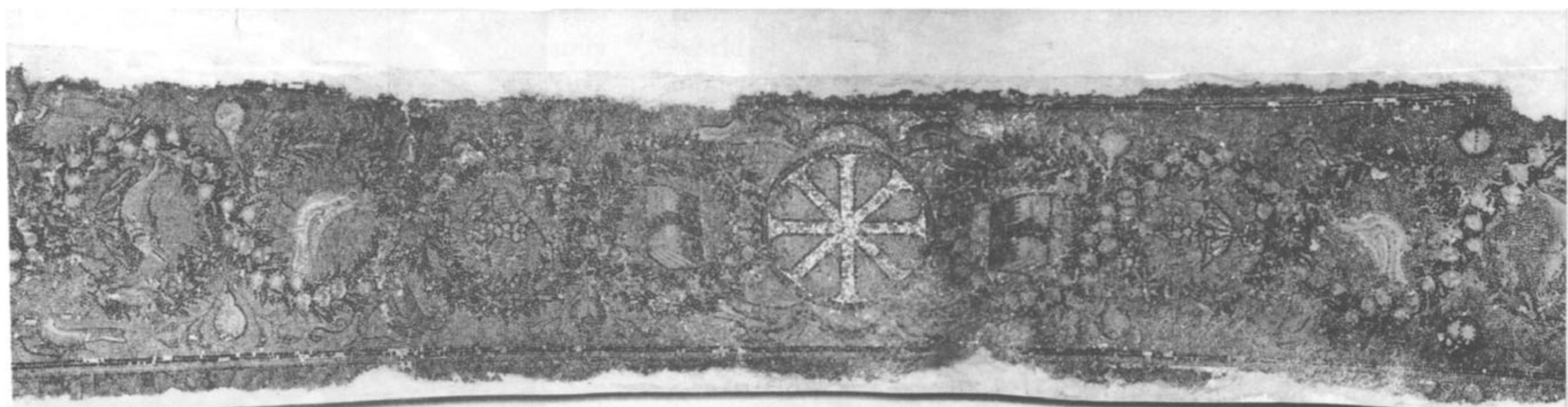


b. Nave and gallery colonnades



d. Detail of nave soffit

e. Detail of narthex soffit



a. Detail of mosaic floor in the forecourt

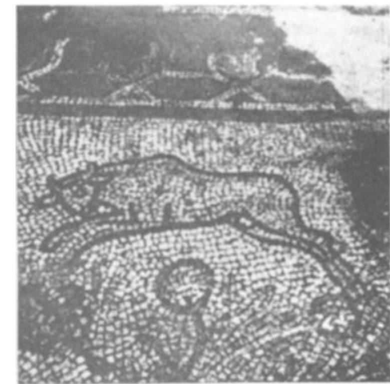
36 EAST BASILICA AT HERACLEA LYNCESTIS

b. Detail of a: the Peacock



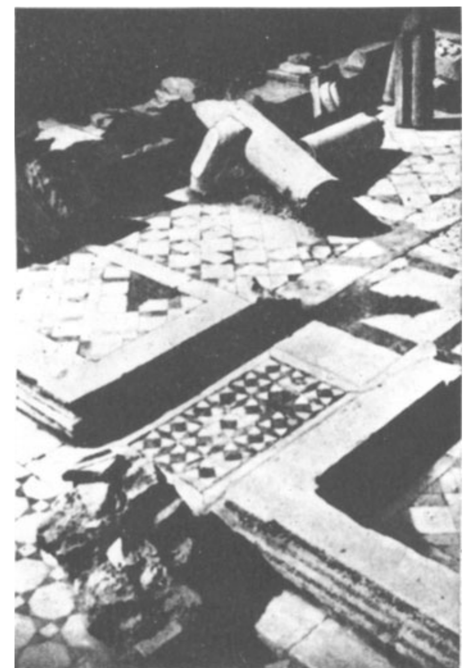


c. Lioness



d. Bull

Animals in the mosaic floor in the forecourt



e. Chancel screen stylobates at the opening from the sanctuary into the nave

f. Nave, looking west from the sanctuary



his order performed their offices. The inscription beneath was equally in character. It ran:

† πανόλβιε τοῦ Χριστοῦ μάρτυς, φιλόπολις,
φροντίδα τίθη κ(αὶ) πολιτῶν κ(αὶ) ξένων.

Blessed Martyr of Christ, friend of the city, protect the citizens and strangers.

G. St Demetrius and Two Children (Pl. 33*a*). St Sergius (Pl. 33*b*)

The panel of St Demetrius and Two Children appears on the west face of the pier occupying the eastern end of the northern nave colonnade. Situated above the level of the architrave surmounting the chancel screen, it was visible from all parts of the nave and, except where piers or pillars intervened, from the aisles.

St Demetrius, supernaturally tall as before and clad in a splendid chlamys with the tablion, differs most noticeably in appearance from his other images in having luxuriantly thick and wavy hair. The spirituality conveyed by the large, serene but penetrating eyes and the elongated, formless body is still there; but the generally ascetic nature of his face which is so powerful a feature of the other compositions is here replaced by a physical beauty and a carefully moulded plasticity.

The two children — the authorities differ quite categorically as to their sexes — stand slightly in front of the saint. Both wear a simple chlamys with a tablion as an indication of their noble blood, and both have the large eyes and penetrating gaze that are characteristics of their protector. St Demetrius raises his right hand in the gesture of salvation and rests his left on the shoulder of one of the children, although this act does not appear to disarrange the folds of his chlamys. Above a wall in the background, a curtain of green and gold, of similar material to that hanging upon the battlements behind the two Builders, is hung behind his halo. It does not, however, impinge upon it as is the case with the curtain behind the battlements.

The icon of St Sergius occupies the west face of the pier at the eastern end of the south colonnade of the nave. Its position corresponds to that of the mosaic of St Demetrius and the Two Children, similarly situated at the end of the north colonnade.

St Sergius stands alone. He is as disproportionately tall as St Demetrius and similarly has a mass of curly hair. His hands are raised in prayer and he, too, wears a splendid chlamys and tablion, as well as his characteristic golden circlet around his neck. The decoration of the chlamys, consisting of trefoils alternating with rayed circles within other circles, has been superimposed without regard to the folds of the garment. The background of wall and ceremonial curtain behind the halo is similar to that of the corresponding St Demetrius panel.

A comparison with the probably sixth-century icon of SS Sergius and Bacchus from Sinai, and now at Kiev, makes it clear that the Thessalonian panel (unless a copy of the Sinai icon) faithfully reproduces an already established image of the saint. Sergius and Bacchus, both officers, had been martyred during the persecution under Diocletian, and they were particularly revered by Justinian, one of whose first acts on gaining the throne was to found a church in their honour in Constantinople.

In style and in many matters of detail the panels of St Sergius and St Demetrius and the Children are so similar as to be almost certainly contemporary and probably the work of the same artist. To suggest a firm date is more difficult. While, as we have seen, St Sergius, a martyr of the east Syrian desert, strictly conforms to his iconography, St Demetrius, in his own church and city, and surrounded by other uniformly orthodox examples, does not. In view of the preciseness observed in Byzantine art over iconographic details, the different arrangement of hair might be held to argue a very much later date than the other mosaics of St Demetrius. Yet it seems improbable that two such prominent positions would be left vacant for long while other less important sites were being used.

In view of their situation the donor of these two mosaics is likely to have been an exceptionally wealthy and powerful person. Such a person would not necessarily have limited himself to local talent. The panels showing St Demetrius with the Builders and with the Deacon may perhaps be regarded as Thessalonian work, reflecting those Syrian influences currently dominant in the liturgy and in ecclesiastical architecture. Do those of St Demetrius and the Children and St Sergius represent the work of another part of the Christian world where Hellenism had remained the dominant influence? If so, the puzzling differences would be more accountable.

The links between Thessalonica and Alexandria and the possibility of Alexandrian influence appearing in the panel of St Demetrius with the Mother and Child have already been mentioned. About the same time as the reconstruction of the church in the second quarter of the seventh century, the Moslem Arabs were entering upon their era of conquests and Egypt fell to them in 640. Although few examples have survived of the art of the Egyptian provinces of the Byzantine Empire, the monastery of St Catherine in Sinai was successful in preserving a number of icons from this period. That of SS Sergius and Bacchus has already been mentioned as bearing close similarities to the panel in Thessalonica. Another, still at Sinai, shows the Virgin and Child enthroned between two saints. The saint on the left, from his appearance presumably St Theodore, wears a chlamys decorated with a design that, if slightly more simple, is similar to that worn by St Sergius, and has been applied with precisely the same disregard for the garment's folds. The other saint, identified as St George and wearing a chlamys, has his hair arranged after the fashion of St Sergius.

If these two panels were the work of an immigrant Alexandrian artist we would have also an explanation for the unusual softness of St Demetrius's expression obtained by delicately modulated shading. This was a Hellenistic and Roman feature which Greek Egypt retained longer than anywhere else in the early Byzantine world. It would also be an explanation of the large, penetrating eyes, a characteristic of the children as well as of the two saints.

Should this supposition be correct, the two panels may be more or less contemporary with that of St Demetrius and the Builders, that is to say *circa* mid-seventh century.

H. The Virgin and St Theodore (Pl. 34)

This panel stands on the south side of the north-east pier of the nave. It faces St Demetrius and the Builders, and presents the Virgin in semi-profile.

The Virgin's right hand is raised in prayer, while her left holds a scroll, upon which is written:

> *Δέησις. Κ[ύρι]ε ὁ Θ[εό]ς, εἰσάκουσον τῆς φωνῆς τῆς δεήσεώς μου, ὅτι ὑπὲρ τοῦ κόσμου δέομαι.*

Supplication. Lord God, hear the voice of my prayers, for I pray for mankind.

On the right-hand side a saint stands in a frontal position, his hands lifted in prayer. He wears a finely decorated chlamys with a tablion, and this, taken with his long thin face, pointed black beard and thick black hair, indicates him to be St Theodore, another military saint, the same probably who appeared with the Virgin in the north inner aisle.

A wall, without battlements, rises to shoulder height in the background. Above this, at the top of the panel, a small bust of Christ appears in a half-orb of light — probably symbolising the Heavens, but perhaps not entirely lacking an implication of Christ-Helios — from which radiates alternating wide and narrow beams of light. In general, the colouring of this mosaic is more sober than in the others, but this impression is to some extent due to the dark red mantle of the Virgin and the plainness of most of the background.

Only part of the votive inscription at the bottom of the panel remains. It reads:

> . . . *ἐν ἀνθρώποις ἀπελπισθεὶς παρὰ δὲ τῆς σῆς δυνάμεως ζωοποιηθεὶς εὐχαριστῶν ἀνεθέμην. Κλήμης.*

. . . discouraged by men, saved by your strength, in thankfulness I dedicate this offering. Klimes.

The differences between this mosaic and its companion-pieces have generally led to its being regarded as a later work, possibly tenth or eleventh century. Sotiriou, however, points out that it is not, in fact, very different in style from the panel showing St Demetrius and the Two Children, and suggests that it cannot be later than the ninth century. Yet if we examine the figure of St Theodore apart from the rest of the composition and compare it with that of St Sergius, it is difficult to come to the conclusion that more than a few years can separate the two, although St Theodore is not, perhaps, quite so skilfully or splendidly executed. Moreover, St Theodore is fully as 'Alexandrian' as St Sergius and the small image of Christ at the top of the panel is a feature of several early Sinai icons. In the case of the Virgin a particular problem arises through her half-profile stance, which presents her face at an unusual angle. Nevertheless, one *circa* seventh-century painting of the Virgin, that in S. Maria Novella in Rome, is remarkably like the Thessalonian image, both in spirit and in certain stylistic points. Talbot Rice says of this panel: 'the painting (is) carefully and subtly

modelled, and the tones merge gently one into the other; the characteristic Byzantine highlights are completely absent. Especially noteworthy are the delicately pink tones of the flesh, laid over a green undercoat, and the almond-shaped eyes with eyebrows curling over them like hooks and forming a continuous line with the shadow of the nose.'[1] The early eighth-century wall paintings of S. Maria Antiqua in Rome and the late sixth- or early seventh-century Virgin in the apse of the Panaghia Angelokisti in Cyprus are other interesting comparisons. In the latter the Virgin is shown full face, but the type is clearly the same and the clothing and its arrangement almost identical. St Theodore appears beside the Virgin in one of the fifth- or sixth-century Sinai icons. His great reputation as a soldier would also particularly endear him to the Thessalonians of around this time.

It seems that the customary later dates for this mosaic require reconsideration and that it may well belong rather to the middle of the seventh century. Whatever the date, perhaps more important is the fact that the Virgin is here a prototype of the long line of later images of her as the intercessor for mankind, either in the scene of the Crucifixion or in the Deisis.

I. St Demetrius and the Four Ecclesiastics (Pl. 33)

This is a badly damaged panel on the narrow wall between the tribelon and the western end of the north inner colonnade.

St Demetrius, wearing a chlamys with a tablion, stands between and a little behind two bishops, whose rank is indicated by the omophoria which both wear. Their heads and that of St Demetrius have been destroyed, it would seem deliberately. The saint's hands rest upon the bishops' shoulders as they do in the mosaic of the Builders. Flanking, and standing slightly behind the two bishops are two other ecclesiastics. The one on the left has a short dark beard and dark hair. He is dressed in a stikarion and the orarion over his left shoulder shows him to be a deacon. The one on the right is white bearded; the phelonion he wears indicates that he is a priest.

The remnants of a circular halo can be seen above the shoulders of St Demetrius and there are light rectangular panels behind the heads of his four companions. A curtain hung on rings from the upper edge of the mosaic completes the background. No wall is visible behind the five persons and the arrangement of the light-coloured rectangular panels, particularly the narrow intervals between them gives the impression that in this case they are more likely to have been intended as square haloes of living persons than as battlements.

The two heads that have survived are vivid characterisations and show every sign of being contemporary portraits. Although of decidedly inferior workmanship the mosaic is obviously modelled upon that of St Demetrius with the Builders. However, the presence of two living bishops with the saint is strange. Possibly a copying of the earlier mosaic in order to accrue some of its prestige was, at least in part, the reason for inserting what appear to be the 'haloes'.

This panel, therefore, probably belongs to a later period than that of the Builders, perhaps to some time during the eighth century.

7. THE BASILICA OF THE HOLY VIRGIN 'ACHEIROPOIETOS', THESSALONICA (Pls. V, 35)

The Church of the Holy Virgin, 'Acheiropoietos', Thessalonica's second great fifth-century basilica, is ignored by any literary source known to us until the tenth century. Architectural evidence, however, places it in the first half of the fifth, and it seems reasonably certain that it was constructed between 431, the date of the Council of Ephesus, and the middle of the century. 'Acheiropoietos', 'Not Made by Human Hands', is a description that referred to a miraculous icon of the Virgin. From it the church, in which it was placed, took its early and now universally used name.

In view of the popularity in Thessalonica of pre-Christian maternal dieties, it was only to be expected that its citizens might express their allegiance to the Christian faith by rendering especial homage to the Mother of Christ. Nestorius, Patriarch of Constantinople, had maintained the doctrine of dual human and

[1] D. Talbot Rice, *The Beginnings of Christian Art* (London, 1957), p. 112.

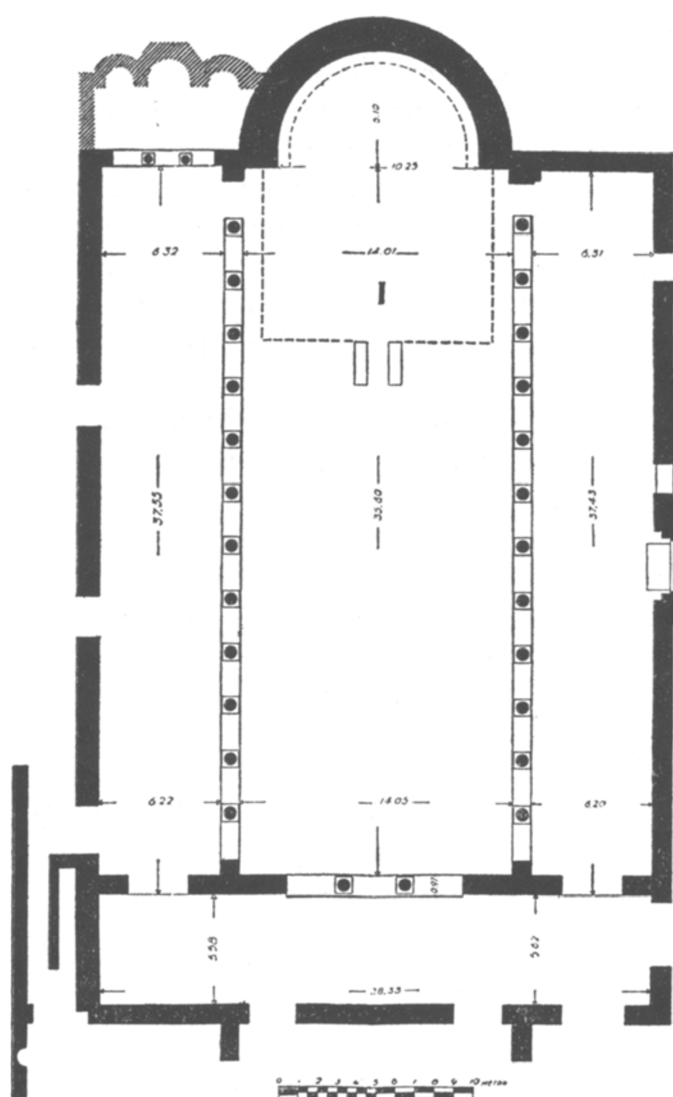


Fig. 68. BASILICA OF THE HOLY VIRGIN 'ACHEIROPOIETOS', THESSALONICA. PLAN

divine natures of Christ, with its corollary that the Virgin was the mother, not of the divine, but only of the human Christ. When, therefore, the Council of Ephesus rejected this doctrine, and upheld instead the contention of Alexandria and Rome that the Virgin was, indeed, Theotokos, the Mother of God, the Thessalonians welcomed the decision enthusiastically. It occurred at a time of expanding prosperity, of indulgence in a passionate zest for theological argument, and of popular resentment against the capital. In these circumstances, the construction of a new and splendid church, dedicated to the Mother of God, was an appropriate manner of commemorating the Council's confirmation of the divinity of the Virgin and the condemnation and overthrow of the Patriarch of Constantinople who had dared to deny it.

After the Turkish conquest 'Acheiropoietos' was converted into a mosque and was known as Eski Djouma. In the course of time its Christian beginnings and even its original name became completely forgotten. Western travellers of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, including Felix de Beaujour, Cousinéry and Colonel Leake, all describe it as an ancient temple of the Thermaic Venus or Aphrodite, itself an interesting reflection of the strength of the city's 'Great Mother' tradition.

In plan, 'Acheiropoietos' is a plain, Hellenistic-type basilica with a semicircular, protruding apse lit by three windows. The nave is separated from the two aisles by rows of twelve columns; above the aisles are galleries. A western narthex opens into the nave through a tribelon and also has access to each of the aisles. A high, triple window, however, replaces the usual central doorway leading from the atrium, with the effect that those outside cannot view the sanctuary and apse until they have come inside the narthex. In addition to entrances from the narthex, doorways in the north and south walls give direct access to the aisles. The total length, including apse and narthex, is 50 metres. The nave alone is nearly 37 metres long and 15½ metres wide. The aisles are 7½ metres in width.

Pelekanides points out that, although in its ground plan 'Acheiropoietos' conforms to the normal Hellenic type of early Byzantine basilica, it is exceptional in its subtly asymmetrical disposition of windows in two rows, separated by a marble course, to relieve the effect of heaviness and monotony which the long and high north and south walls might otherwise give. As a result, and by virtue of unusually strong walls, the architect has been able to achieve lightness without any sacrifice of architectural unity. The outside wall of the apse has decorated marble slabs below the windows, a feature which, as Pelekanides also mentions, does not appear in other Macedonian or Greek basilicas of the fifth century. Probably in its original state the building had clerestory lighting, but this does not exist now.[1]

[1] S. Pelekanides, ΠΑΛΑΙΟΧΡΙΣΤΙΑΝΙΚΑ ΜΝΗΜΕΙΑ ΘΕΣΣΑΛΟΝΙΚΗΣ (Thessalonica, 1949).





DETAILS FROM THE MOSAIC DECORATION OF TWO OF THE TRIBELON SOFFITS



DETAIL FROM THE MOSAIC DECORATION OF A NARTHEX SOFFIT

V BASILICA OF THE HOLY VIRGIN ‘ACHEIROPOIETOS’, THESSALONICA

The interior reflects the same impression of a unified architectural conception gained from the exterior. The lines are clean and simple. The twelve columns lining each side of the nave are of greyish-white marble. All have the same Corinthian-type of capital, featuring the upright, overhanging acanthus upon which the drill as well as the chisel has been used, and all are particularly finely executed. In a longitudinal section of the church, Texier and Pullen (who are not always accurate on points of detail) indicate parapets comprising series of marble slabs, each decorated with a cross contained in a horizontal diamond outline, between the Ionic columns of the galleries, but these no longer exist.[1] The two columns of the tribelon are of green marble.

The only pieces of mosaic decoration to survive the centuries occupy the soffits between the columns of the nave, those of the two arches which project the lines of these columns into the narthex, the three soffits of the tribelon, and those of the south gallery. Each one of these is an individual composition; but, although no two are identical, all are characterised by a superb richness of colouring and luxuriance of ornamental design. The motives are extremely varied — intertwining vine scrolls; flowers, particularly lilies, or foliate and fruit-bearing branches rising from ornate vases and sometimes containing wreaths encircling crosses (both the four-armed Latin and the star monogrammed forms of cross are shown); interlacing foliate, fruit-bearing or pine-tuft wreaths enclosing crosses, sacred books, vases, birds, fish lying on elaborate dishes; entrelacs and geometric designs enclosing birds and fruit within multi-coloured octagons; stylised trees of life, plumes and peacock-eye patterns. These designs are within borders that are equally varied and appear against backgrounds of richly gleaming gold often teeming with fruit, flowers and birds. A comparison with the early fourth-century soffit illustrated in Plate 9 shows the traditional nature of some, at least, of these compositions.

Nevertheless, these were but minor details — like the mosaics in the vaults of the bays in St George — of what must have been a great unified artistic scheme devoted to the glorification of the Mother of God. We know nothing at all of what was once in the apse and on the walls of the nave. We may guess that

[1] C. Texier and R. P. Pullen, *Byzantine Architecture* (London, 1864), Pl. xliii.

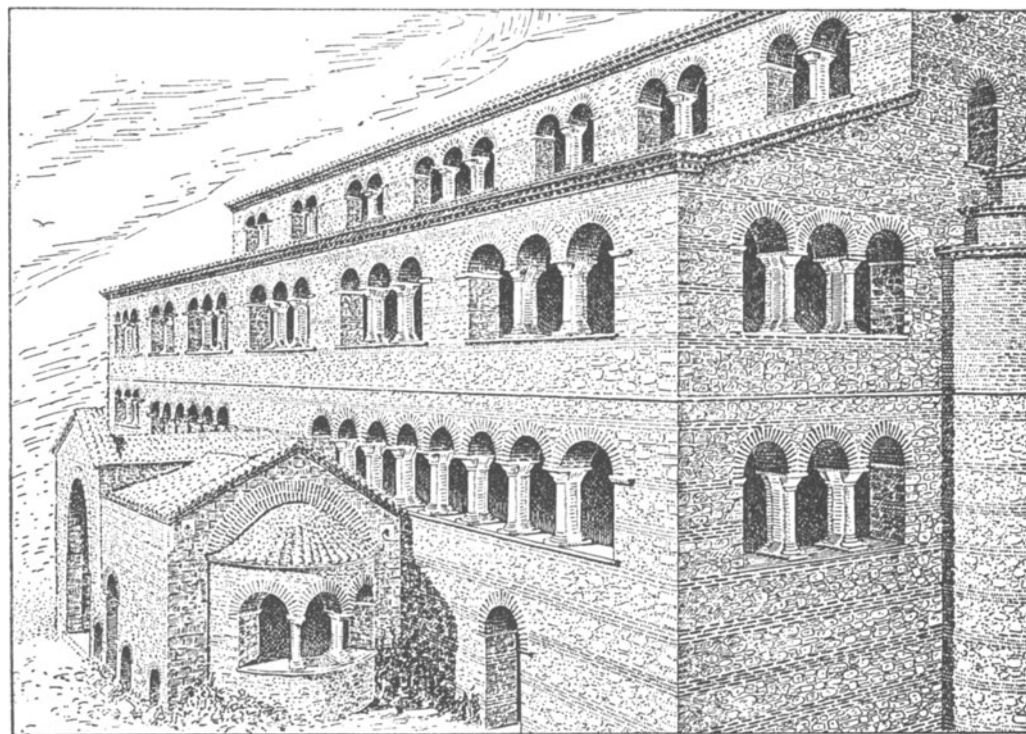


Fig. 69. BASILICA OF THE HOLY VIRGIN 'ACHEIROPOIETOS', THESSALONICA
The south face showing the original clerestory windows. (Reconstruction by Orlandos)

representations of saints and probably Christ and the Virgin formed the major part, for these would understandably have been destroyed either by the eighth-century Christian iconoclasts or by the later Turks as inimical to Islamic tenets. Perhaps along the walls there were processions of saints, forerunners of those in S. Apollinare Nuovo, Ravenna. If so, the beauty of the soffit mosaics is sufficient evidence for us to be sure that there would have been none of that stiffness and absence of characterisation that mark so many of the Ravenna figures, particularly those of the male saints. The Galla Placidia chapel in Ravenna and the Baptistery of Soter in Naples were approximately contemporary structures, and perhaps in their mosaics we may find the safest guide available to-day should we try to recall in our own imaginations the majesty of mid-fifth-century 'Acheiropoietos'.

The bema originally extended into the nave as far as the third pair of columns. Presbytery seats were ranged north and south of the altar and not in the apse.[1] There is no structural evidence of side chambers and the white marble slabs which form the nave floor reach to the eastern wall. In the arrangement of its sanctuary too, therefore, 'Acheiropoietos' follows the simple Greek basilical plan and rejects the Oriental tripartite tendencies which had already appeared in St Demetrius and in the dome mosaics of St George. This is readily understandable in view of the fact that the building of 'Acheiropoietos' had taken place at a time when Thessalonica was stubbornly and vigorously 'kicking against the pricks' of Constantinople and expressing its loyalty to the Bishop of Rome in obstinate defiance of imperial decrees. Its form was, perhaps, also an indication of the revival of Roman prestige under the leadership of Pope Leo the Great (440–61). Yet, as in the cases of its sister Hellenistic basilicas in Greece and the Aegean islands, the sanctuary was no longer in the fourth-century Roman position of the middle of the nave, but placed at the eastern end.

Before the Turkish conquest, 'Acheiropoietos' was the centre of a group of conventual buildings serving various social and philanthropic purposes including care of the aged and the sick and provision of meals for the poor. These buildings have long since disappeared. The small fifth-century single-apsed baptistery adjoining the south wall is still, however, in existence.

[1] A. Xyngopoulos, 'Concerning Acheiropoietos Thessalonica', ΜΑΚΕΔΟΝΙΚΑ, vol. ii, 1941–52 (Thessalonica, 1953), p. 472 *et seq.* (Greek).

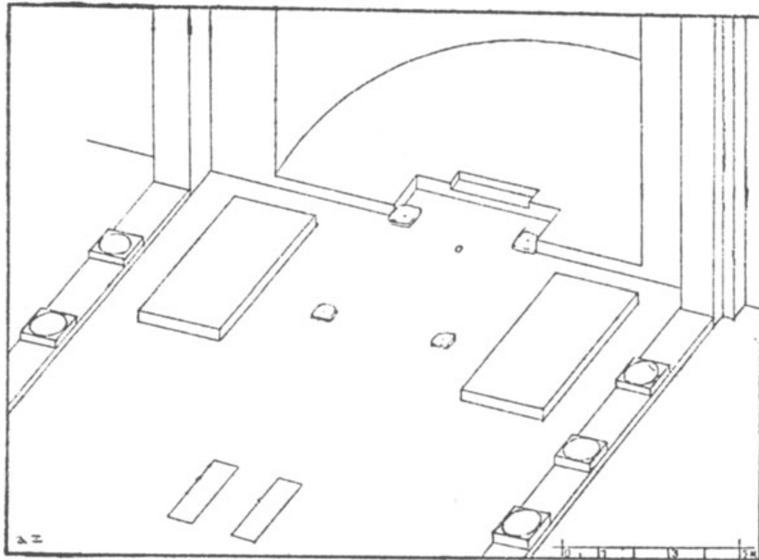


Fig. 70. BASILICA OF THE HOLY VIRGIN 'ACHEIROPOIETOS', THESSALONICA. The arrangement of the sanctuary in the fifth century. (Reconstruction by Xyngopoulos)

8. THE BASILICA AT TUMBA, THESSALONICA

In 1917, while building a military barracks in a suburb of Thessalonica known as Tumba, the foundations of a basilica dating back to the fifth century were discovered. These were excavated and examined, but after this, unfortunately, the necessities of war reasserted their priority and the construction of the barracks proceeded.

As originally built, the Tumba basilica is generally of the 'Acheiropoietos' rather than the St Demetrius type. It has a central nave of greater width than the two lateral aisles combined, a semicircular, protruding apse and a narthex of the same width as the aisles. The dimensions of the nave and aisles are 15·50 by 13·30 metres. A tribelon is situated at the west end of the nave and a chancel screen with a central opening extends from the apse to occupy over a third of the length of the nave. Sotiriou has convincingly demonstrated

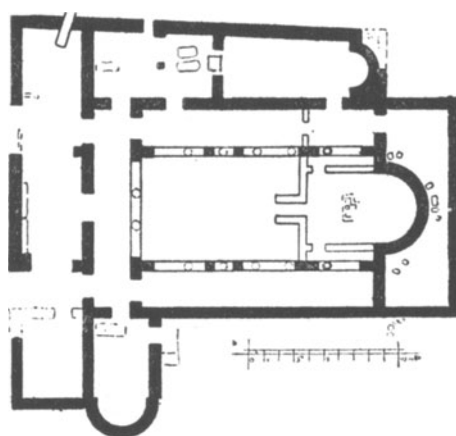


Fig. 71. BASILICA AT TUMBA, THESSALONICA. PLAN

that two lines of five columns, 1·80 metres apart as in 'Acheiropoietos', divided the nave from the aisles.[1]

In the middle of the sanctuary was discovered the remains of a small T-shaped reliquary crypt, measuring 1·10 by 1·80 metres. Above this was probably the altar.

The basilica stood in the centre of a number of subsidiary and adjoining buildings. The north and south walls were projected east beyond the apse. Connected by another wall, they gave a rectangular aspect to the east end of the basilica. This enclosure, which was probably not roofed, was used as a burial place and had an entrance into the north aisle. Alongside this aisle were two rectangular chambers, the more easternly having an apparently inscribed apse at its east end. The other, which opened into the narthex as well as the north aisle, was divided into two by piers, and served as a baptistery. However, the recent excavation of the 'Extra Muros' Basilica at Philippi with its northern pastophoria opens the possibility that these annexes were originally rooms for the diaconicon and prothesis and thus evidence of Northern Mesopotamian influence. Another room, with a southern apse, extended south from the narthex. An exonarthex ran along the western termination of the entire complex.

Such a plan in a Thessalonian church suggests a date before the middle of the fifth century. In time, alterations came to be made. An extension of the chancel screen found in the north aisle is likely to have been made in the second half of the sixth century to provide space for a new prothesis chamber. Later still came the replacement of the lines of columns by piers. Three on each side, these were spaced at unequal distances from each other and from the terminating walls (2·80 m., 3·60 m., 1·30 m., 3·40 m.). This substitution of piers may have been necessitated by a decision to change the roof from one of Hellenistic timber work to a dome. Since the district of 'Tumba' lay outside the city walls it is likely that enemy destruction afforded opportunity enough for constant remodelling of the church on more up-to-date lines.

[1] G. A. Sotiriou, ΑΡΧΑΙΟΛΟΓΙΚΗ ΕΦΗΜΕΡΙΣ, 1929 (Athens), pp. 177–8.

9. THE TWO BASILICAS AT HERACLEA LYNCESTIS (Pl. 36)

Excavations which were started shortly before the outbreak of the Second World War interrupted the work, indicate that the fortifications of Heraclea Lyncestis were strengthened or perhaps rebuilt sometime around the fifth century. The same excavations also uncovered parts of two churches situated close to each other within the walls of the citadel.[2, 3, 4]

The larger and probably the earlier of the two was a single-apsed basilica with a nave and two aisles that had been built over the foundations of an earlier building. The excavations did not reveal the full length of the church, nor the nature of its narthex or atrium. That it was of considerable size, however, is shown by the width of the nave, more than 9 metres, and the aisles, approximately 5 metres. Stylobates carrying colonnades had separated the nave from the aisles, but these were too badly damaged to determine the positions of the columns. The basilica had once possessed a mosaic floor of which scattered tesserae remained the only evidence. The apse, semicircular inside and, except for a short straight termination at its southern end, with a semicircular exterior, was supported by three buttresses

[2] M. Grbić, 'Excavations at Heraclea', *Umetnički Pregled*, 11, 1938 (Belgrade), p. 351 (Serbian).

[3] M. Grbić, 'Excavations at Heraclea Lyncestis near Bitola', *Umetnički Pregled*, 8, 1939 (Belgrade), pp. 231–5 (Serbian).

[4] M. Grbić, 'Ausgrabungen in Heraclea Lyncestis bei Bitolj in Südserbien', *Bericht über den VI. Int. Kongress für Archäologie*, Berlin, 1940, pp. 180–1.

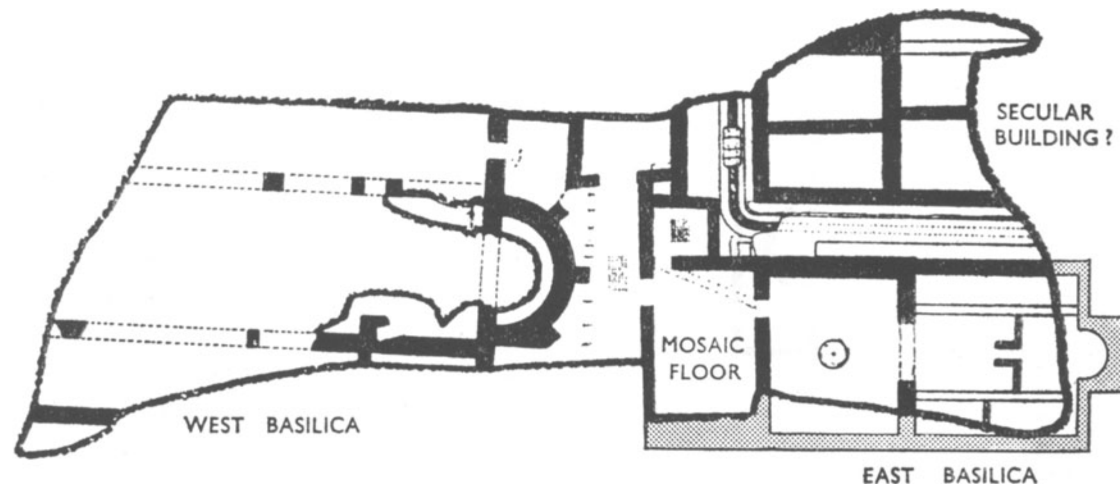


Fig. 72. TWO BASILICAS AT HERACLEA LYNCESTIS. PLAN
Black areas indicate pre-war excavations, dotted areas are an approximation of the results of current excavations

similar to those of the 'Extra Muros' Basilica at Philippi.

Steps descended from a doorway at the east end of the north aisle into a room which inscribed the apse on its northern side and from which a stylobate carrying the marble bases of columns ran in a southerly direction in front of the apse, presumably to a similar room inscribing the south side of the apse The excavations did not extend as far as this, but the supposition is supported by the squaring-off of the apse on the south. A brick-paved area east of this colonnade led into a courtyard, some 70 metres square, which was floored with finely executed and well-preserved mosaics.

This mosaic courtyard seems to have been part of the building complex belonging to the second basilica. An eastern doorway led from the mosaic-floored courtyard into another, somewhat larger, paved with slabs of marble and with a fountain in the middle. This served as the atrium of the second basilica although it was probably constructed as part of an earlier building. In the apparent absence of a narthex it opened directly into the nave of the basilica, the excavation of which was begun by Grbić and which is now being continued after a lapse of twenty years.

This basilica, considerably smaller than the earlier one, comprised a nave and two aisles and a single protruding apse that was semicircular inside and three-sided on the exterior. The stylobates of the chancel screen and its central opening were uncovered and the floor, which was composed of small black and grey marble slabs arranged in simple geometrical patterns, had also survived in quite good condition (Pls. 36*e* and *f*). Here were also found sculptured chancel slabs, pillars and capitals of various dates. Some of these have unfortunately since disappeared. In the course of the current excavations evidence has also been discovered of a curtaining-off of the eastern end of the southern aisle.

The mosaic floor of the courtyard between the two churches is composed of three panels of different widths which run, strip fashion, from north to south (Pl. 36*a*). The easternmost panel consists of spiral interlacings containing two rows of alternated birds and fruits within geometrically-patterned borders of squares and hexagons. Next to this is a narrow strip displaying three groups of opposed birds or beasts — water fowl (Pl. 36*a*), a lioness and a bull (Pls. 36*c* and *d*) and peacocks — each separated by an amphora. Also within this strip are two patches inserted at a different date and executed with larger tesserae. One patch shows a geometrical design within a square border (Pl. 36*a*), the other, placed upside down and impinging upon the hindquarters of the lioness, water fowl.

The third and most westerly mosaic panel is the largest. It is bordered by strips of interlacing squares and circles enclosing water fowl, of which Grbić comments that they are types of local birds which still abound in the nearby lake into which the Cerna Reka flows. Within these borders two narrow bands of spiral interlacings contain the main design — three rows of square fields, each separated from the

a. Landscape north of Prilep

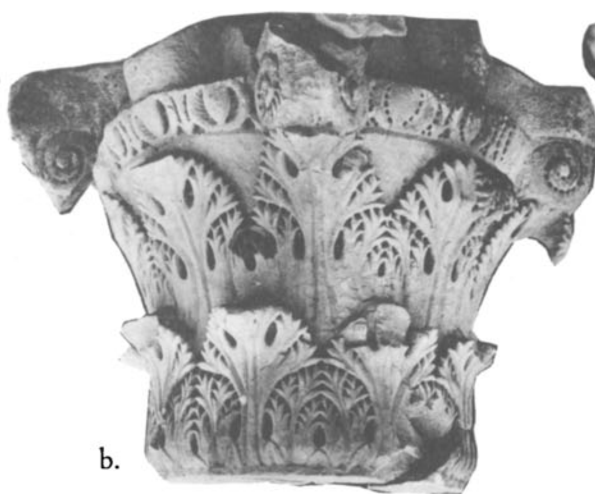


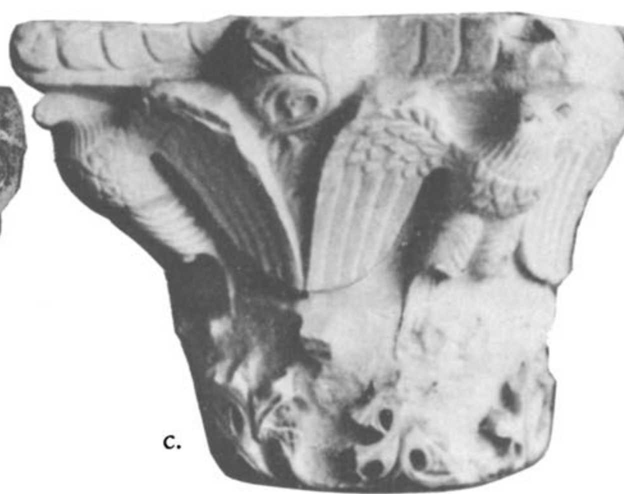
b. Aerial View of Stobi. The Basilica of Bishop Philip appears on the extreme right, the Quatrefoil Baptistery Basilica on the extreme left. The'Synagogue' Basilica is the third apsed building from the left.



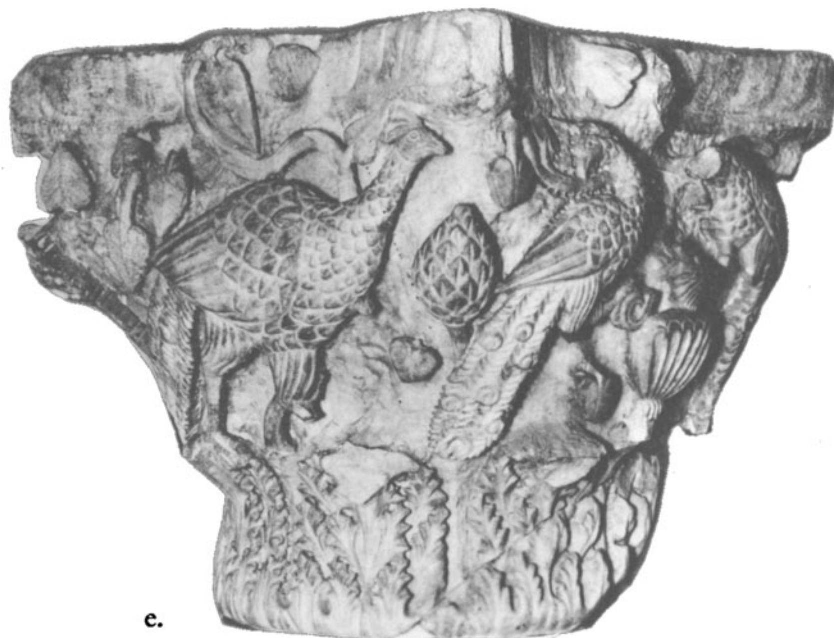
c. Aerial view of the Cemetery Basilica, Stobi.

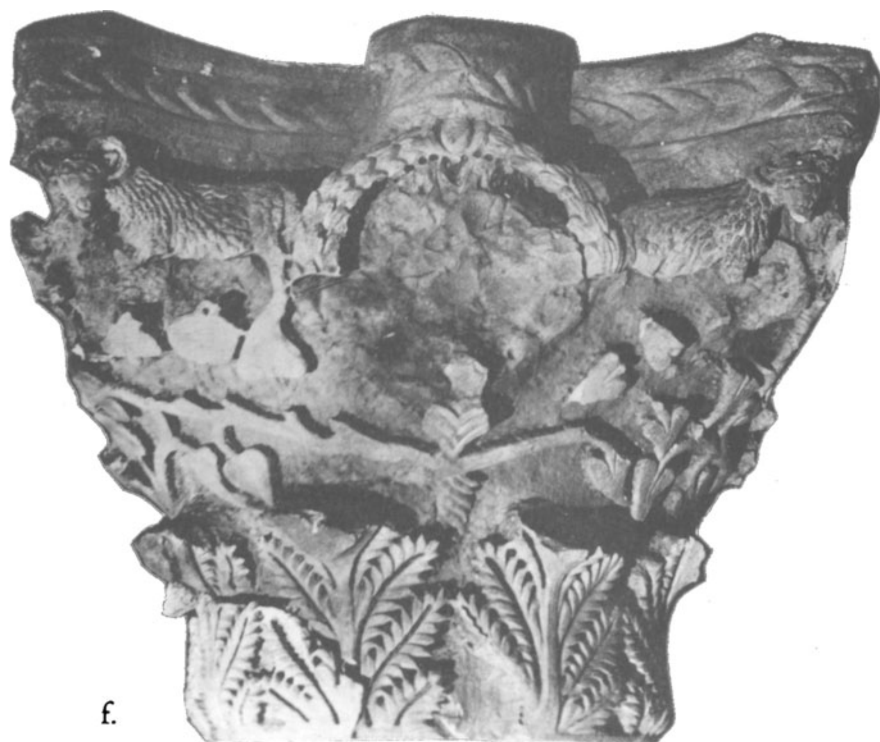

a.


b.


c.


d.


e.


f.


g.

CAPITALS FROM THE NAVE COLONNADES


a.


b.


c.


d.


e.


f.


g.


h.


i.

IONIC IMPOST-CAPITALS FROM THE GALLERIES


j.


k.


l.

IMPOSTS FROM THE NAVE COLONNADES

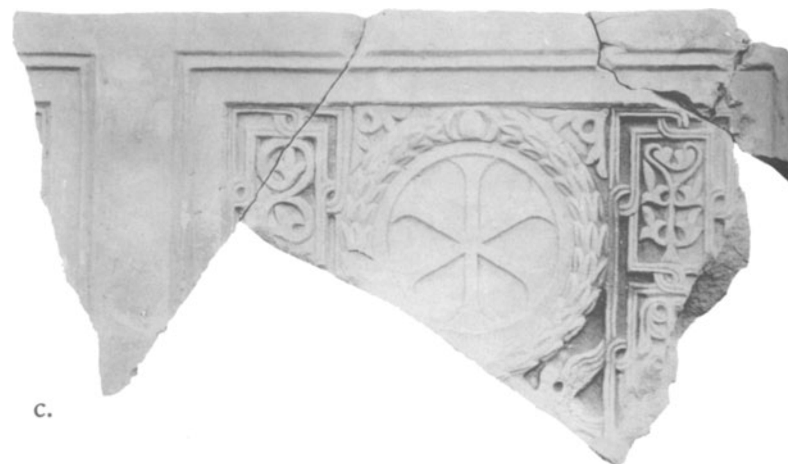




a. Fragments of the ambo



b.



c.



d.

Fragments of slabs, probably from the chancel screen



e. Slab, probably from a gallery or nave colonnade


a.


b.


c.

MOSAIC FLOOR OF THE NARTHEX. DETAILS

41 BASILICA OF BISHOP PHILIP, STOBI



b.



c.

MOSAIC FLOOR OF THE NARTHEX. DETAILS



a.



d.

42 BASILICA OF BISHOP PHILIP. STOBI

next by a series of diamond-shaped lozenges. Each of the squares frame some such symbol as a vessel, a basket of fruit or a four-leaved cross.

In one place this panel, too, is interrupted by a patch of different mosaic showing an approximately life-size peacock, superbly executed in particularly rich colours and with smaller tesserae than the rest (Pls. 36*a* and *b*). It is obviously an interpolation, either a later repair or, more probably, a piece of an earlier work retained in a later composition because of its exceptional beauty. Thus three different periods are represented on the floor. The first is almost certainly the peacock, perhaps a relic of the days when the Via Egnatia was at the height of its prosperity. Whether the interpolations in the second strip are earlier or later than the main design is more doubtful; the manner in which one of them impinges on the lioness supports a later date, on the other hand it is strange for a repair to be inserted upside down into a design.

Until more of the surrounding buildings have been excavated it is difficult to estimate the function of this courtyard in relation to either of the basilicas. It must be a different date from the atrium of the second basilica, to which it became attached, because its southern wall was given a double thickness to bring it into alignment with the wall of the atrium.[1] The interruption of the mosaic in its north-east corner by a brick-covered channel running in the direction of the fountain in the atrium implies that the mosaic floor existed before the erection of the second basilica.

The present excavation will, it is hoped, provide a chronology for the second church and its various alterations. Possibly they may also provide more information on the first. This, with its unusual east end reminiscent of some of the Salona churches and embodying certain Syrian characteristics, may be fourth or early fifth century. The peacock in the mosaic floor may be its contemporary and have belonged to an annexed building, destroyed, like the basilica and much else in Heraclea Lyncestis during the Gothic wars. So far, however, nothing has been found which would establish such a connection.

[1] I am indebted to Dr. G. Stričević for information on the excavations in progress at the time of writing.

10. THE BASILICA OF BISHOP PHILIP, STOBI (Pls. 37-44)

Stobi, a Hellenistic, Roman and early Byzantine city, was strategically placed at the confluence of the Cerna and Axios (Vardar) rivers. A hundred miles or so north-west of Thessalonica, it was an important junction in the road network established by the Romans in the Balkans. Four roads radiated from it. One travelled north-west to Scupi, and thence to Naissus on the great south-east route from Viminacium on the Danube to Byzantium; the second north-east to Sardica, also on the same Pannonian-Bosphorus highway; the third south-east to Thessalonica; and the fourth to Heraclea Lyncestis. Since both the latter cities lay on the Via Egnatia, it is clear from a glance at the map that the greater part of the traffic connecting the two principal east-west land routes of the Empire could hardly do otherwise than pass through Stobi. The city's combined strategic and commercial importance ensured a steady increase in prosperity until the barbarian invasions of Italy, the growing insecurity of the second half of the fifth century in the Balkans and the invasions of the sixth brought about its decline and eventual ruin. A great earthquake in 518 probably swiftly accelerated the process.

Kitzinger, in a valuable summary of the information gained from excavations in Stobi up to 1940,[2] describes the town as

> situated within the general orbit of Byzantium, prosperous in the fourth, fifth and early sixth centuries, yet sufficiently stagnant afterwards that the traces of this prosperity were not obliterated. . . . Probably sometime in the fourth century the province of Macedonia II (Salutaris) was created; it existed until sometime in the sixth century and Stobi is said to have been its capital. In 388, Theodosius I issued two laws from Stobi. These two traditions — its rise to the rank of a provincial capital and the Emperor's visit — may perhaps suggest an increased importance of the town just at the time when some of the earlier Roman city blocks seem to have undergone a thorough rebuilding. The next political event is the sacking of the town by Theodoric in 479.

[2] E. Kitzinger, 'A Survey of the Early Christian Town of Stobi', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, No. 3 (Harvard, 1946). This includes a full bibliography on the subject to the year 1940.

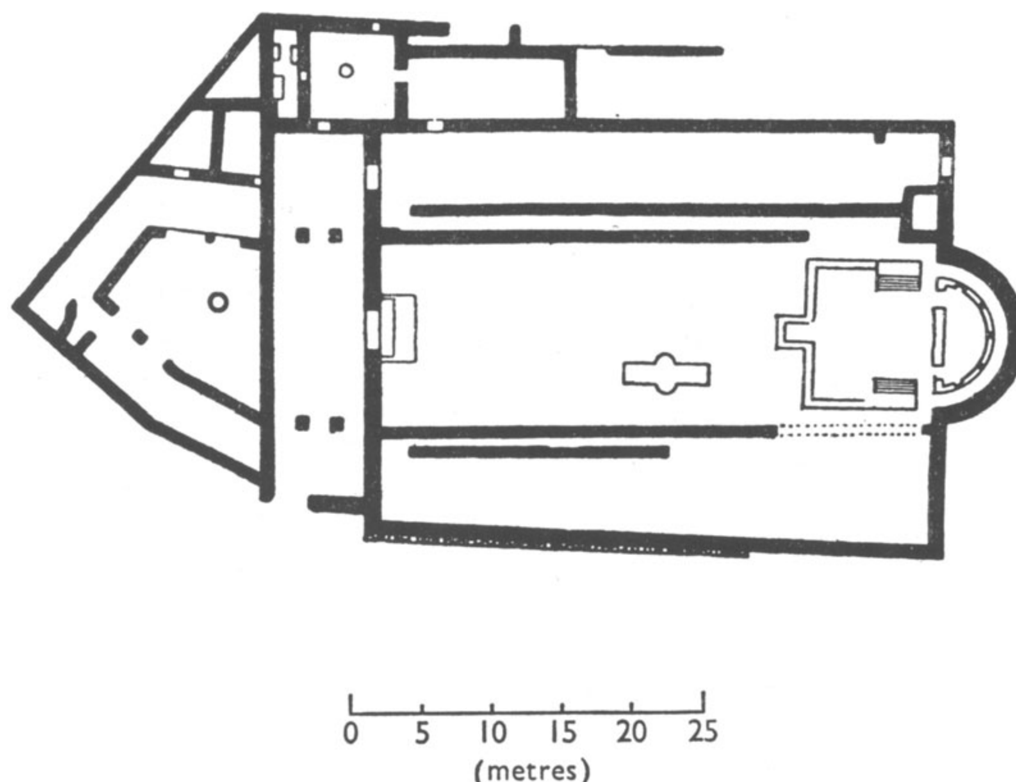


Fig. 73. BASILICA OF BISHOP PHILIP, STOBI. PLAN

Thereafter we have no definite mention of the town in any worldly capacity except for a passing reference in Cedrenus' description of the wars of Basilius II.

In the ecclesiastical field we know of bishops of Stobi taking part in various Councils during every century from the fourth to the seventh. According to Grujić, during that period it was a metropolis with three eparchies. The last time we hear of a bishop of Stobi is in 692.[1]

In view of the conditions of life in the central Balkans during the seventh century, it may be doubted whether the latter-day bishops of Stobi exercised much influence in or even entered their titular see. Cedrenus's mention that Basil II and his Byzantine army occupied Stobi during their campaign against the Bulgarians in 1014 implies that it remained a fortified urban centre after the Slav settlement, or at least was not destroyed as was Caričin Grad. Nevertheless, the city never appears really to have recovered from the sack of Theodoric and the earthquake, two events which took place within less than a quarter of a century of each other.

Stobi's leading church in the fifth century was a large basilica known, from an inscription on the lintel of one of its principal doorways, as the Basilica of Bishop Philip. A Hellenistic type of basilica, it comprised a nave and two aisles, a semicircular, protruding apse, lit, probably, by three windows, no transept, a narthex, galleries above the aisles and probably also over the narthex. The total length was approximately 53 metres and the width 29 metres. West of the narthex was an atrium, upon which the presence of a road and probably other earlier buildings imposed a more or less triangular shape. The south aisle, which narrowed slightly from east to west, is another indication that the church was planned to fit into a space strictly limited by standing buildings. The narthex, in which two pairs of columns projected the nave colonnades, had a northern doorway opening on to a small square room which may have served as a baptistery. Adjoining it, at least one more long, narrow room flanked the north aisle, to which it was connected by a doorway.

The stylobates of the nave embodied two registers, one carrying the columns of the nave and a second, immediately behind and higher, carrying a mullioned screen.[2] Access between the nave and aisles was pro-

[1] E. Kitzinger, *op. cit.* pp. 148–9.

[2] B. Saria, 'Neue Funde in der Bischofskirche von Stobi', *Jahreshefte des Österreichischen Archäologischen Instituts*, 1933, pp. 112–39.

vided at the western ends, but the eastern terminations are less clear.

In the general arrangement of the bema the Basilica of Bishop Philip seems to follow the model of 'Acheiropoietos'. There are no indications of parabemata. Beginning at the western ends of two opposing banks of presbytery seats, situated close to the chord of the apse, stylobates carried a chancel screen into the eastern end of the nave. Nikolajević-Stojković points out that the frontal stylobates were moulded after the fashion of an Attic base, while for those at the sides old seats taken from the theatre were used. The lateral chancel slabs had massive frames decorated on both sides with acanthus, vine, ivy and other carved ornamentation, but those placed in front were decorated with open work. Holding these slabs were short, square, mullion-type pillars [1] (Pl. 40).

The arrangement of the apse is of particular interest. Egger, who excavated the church, reported the following discoveries. Firstly, the floor of the apse was 1·75 metres below that of the bema, which was raised 0·24 metres above the nave. Secondly, there existed the remains of an interior wall, concentric with that of the apse and separated from it by a corridor one metre in width. In the centre of this wall was a colonnade of three pillars, the bases of which were found *in situ*. On the inside, one on either side of the colonnade, were

[1] I. Nikolajević-Stojković, *Early Byzantine Decorative Architectural Sculpture in Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro* (Belgrade, 1957) (Serbian with French summary).

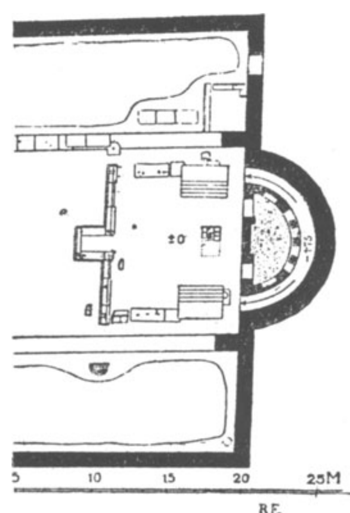


Fig. 74. BASILICA OF BISHOP PHILIP, STOBI
Plan of apse and bema

two small niches. Thirdly, in the centre of the chord of this inner 'apse' was a west wall, containing a somewhat wider, central niche and separated from the western ends of the inner 'apse' by two openings.[2] The purpose of these openings was not investigated at the time of the excavations. We must therefore leave open the possibility that they may have led to a reliquary crypt beneath the altar (Fig. 74).

Steps, replaced at a later date by earthen ramps, provided access from the bema to both the north and south ends of the corridor of the crypt. It was possible, therefore, for persons to enter from one end, and while passing along the semicircular corridor, to see whatever lay inside the inner apse, possibly even entering it, before they left by climbing the steps at the other end.

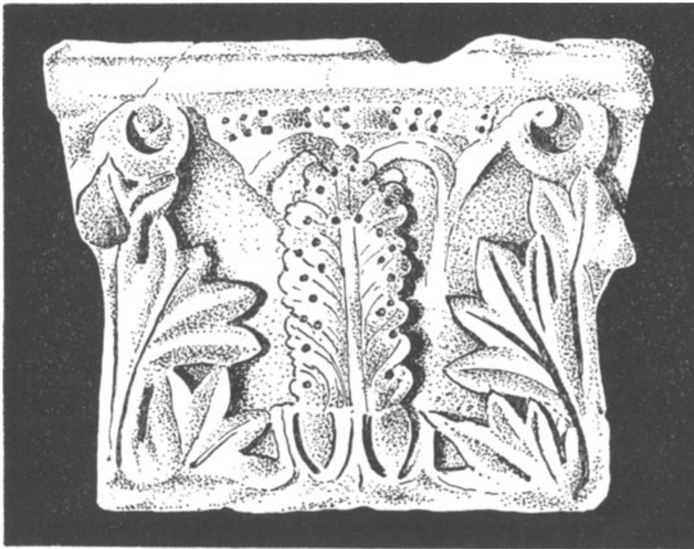
As a martyrium, or cult edifice holding sacred relics, Grabar points out that variants of this form of crypt were to achieve very considerable popularity in western Europe from, at latest, the second half of the seventh century onwards. He quotes numerous examples in Italy, France, Switzerland, Germany and England, beginning with the crypt of S. Apollinare-in-Classe (648–71), and suggests that the example of some particularly famous monument, perhaps the church of St Peter in Rome, may have been responsible.[3]

Grabar's view was soon confirmed by the publication in 1951 of the results of the excavations of the Constantinian basilica of St Peter. Pope Gregory the Great (590–604) decided that the Constantinian shrine of St Peter needed remodelling to give it a form more appropriate to contemporary religious practice. Toynbee and Ward Perkins describe his reconstruction of the shrine as taking

> the form of raising the whole of the area within the Constantinian apse some 1·45 metres above the old pavement-level to form a new, raised presbytery, and of incorporating within it, below this new floor-level, a crypt, known as the Covered (or Semicircular) Confessio. To allow for steps leading up to the presbytery and down into the crypt, the raised platform had to be carried nearly six metres forward into the transept. . . . The crypt, the purpose of which was to provide access to the tomb-shrine beneath the pavement of the

[2] R. Egger, 'Die städtische Kirche von Stobi', *Jahreshefte des Österreichischen Archäologischen Instituts*, 1929, pp. 42-87.

[3] A. Grabar, *Martyrium* (Paris, 1946), vol. I, p. 457 *et seq.*



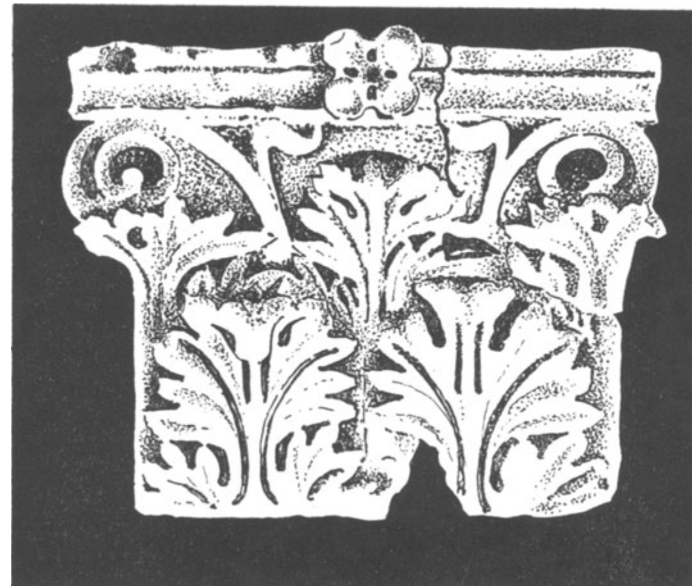



Fig. 75. BASILICA OF BISHOP PHILIP, STOBI. Capitals from the crypt

raised presbytery, consisted of a semicircular corridor, immediately against the inner face of the Constantinian apse, and an axial passage leading from the head of the apse to the back of the shrine. The semicircular passage, which was entered by two doors in the flanks of the platform of the presbytery, immediately against the west wall of the transept, is still substantially preserved.[1]

Yet, although Rome appears to have set the fashion for this kind of martyrium in western Europe, the Stobi crypt had been built, and perhaps destroyed, long before Gregory ascended the throne of St Peter.

[1] J. Toynbee and J. Ward Perkins, *The Shrine of St Peter* (London, 1957), p. 216.

From where, then, did Stobi draw its inspiration? St Demetrius in Thessalonica is certainly the most likely answer. The crypt of this church is very much larger and more complex, but, when originally built, it was a part of the Roman baths; and its conversion into the crypt of a Christian basilica was an architectural accident. Nevertheless, it also contains a semicircular apsidal construction enclosed within an ambulatory, although, as far as can be seen, at Stobi the only access to the ambulatory came from the bema.

Evidence of mosaic flooring has been discovered in the narthex and in the south aisle, although only in the central part of the narthex has it survived in reasonably good condition. Here eight square sections, seven of

which have been preserved, are enclosed within a border of interlaced circles containing such symbols as birds, flowers and vessels. They cover an area of 12·5 by 6·25 metres. The ornamental motifs of the sections vary. They include a fish-scale design and geometric patterns of various kinds and complexity. In others, animals are the principal subjects. One section presents two sheep on a medallion in the centre of an eight-pointed star, while in the corners canthari stand between opposed ducks and peacocks. In another a large medallion encloses two opposed lambs drinking from a shallow vessel of milk. Another portrays, in a manner reminiscent of Scythian art, a bear attacking a cow or bull (Pls. 41, 42).

Glass tesserae discovered during the excavation of the apse indicate that here, at least, were wall mosaics.

Wall paintings were used to decorate the nave, aisles, narthex and parts of the apse and crypt. However, except for traces of imitation marble revetment in the form of a parapet or balustrade on the walls of the narthex, the only recognisable fragments discovered by the excavators lay scattered among the debris on the floor of the nave and narthex (Pls. 43, 44). Only one, the head of a saint (Pl. 44*c*), came from the nave; the remainder were found in the narthex. Unfortunately, these pieces suffered further injury during the last war, some being destroyed, others damaged, so that we must depend very largely upon photographs taken about the time of the excavations in the late 1920s and early 1930s.

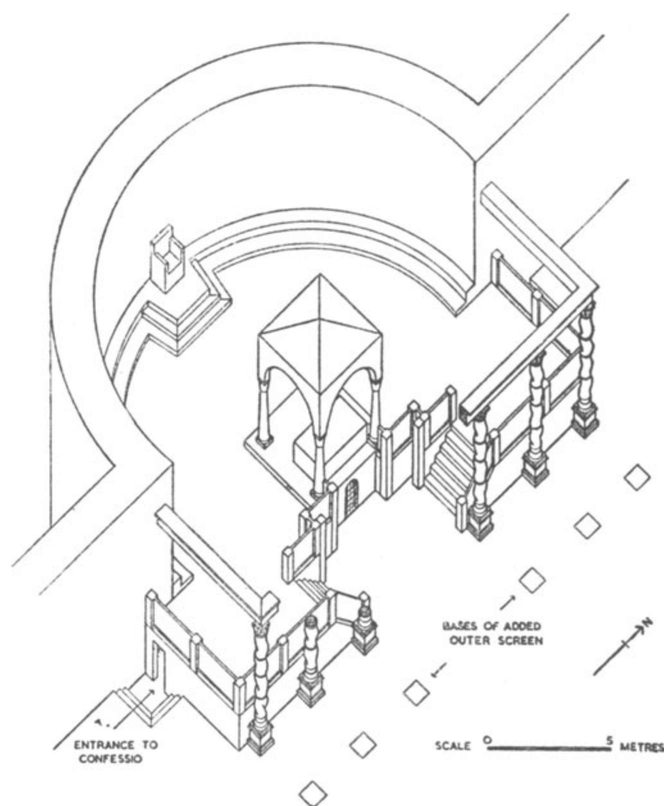


Fig. 76. ST PETER'S, ROME. The sanctuary as rebuilt by Pope Gregory the Great

The imitation marble revetment on the walls of the narthex is very similar to a fragment found in Basilica A at Philippi,[1] and the two may be contemporary. It also reflects more simply, some of the motifs of the mosaic floor.

Our ignorance of the positions of the fragments, chiefly heads, belonging to the narthex makes it extremely difficult to suggest the compositions of which they may have formed part. One tiny fragment is part of a head that, unlike the others, which are all of smaller dimensions, appears to be life-size. However, a close examination of the pre-war photograph (Pl. 43*a*), which I publish through the courtesy of Professor Mano-Zisi, shows it to be part of the head of a lion (cf. Pl. VII) and not of a man as has been customarily thought. Is this then part of a Daniel scene, or does it represent the Lion of St Mark? If the latter, is it to be linked to the remains of a Greek inscription also found in the narthex which Maximović suggests may be a summary of Christ's reply to the women of Samaria: 'Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life'?[2] Such a link might suggest a scene similar to the Vision of Ezekiel in the apse of Hosios David in Thessalonica, where an inscription also refers to the 'life-giving spring', although it seems unlikely that such a scene would be placed in the narthex. Nevertheless the inscription probably does refer to some form of Source of Life scene which may or may not have included the Lion of St Mark.

[1] P. Lemerle, *Philippes et la Macédoine Orientale* (Paris, 1945), Pl. xxxiv.

[2] J. Maximović, 'Contribution à l'étude des fresques de Stobi', *Cahiers Archéologiques*, x, 1959, pp. 207-16. The photographs accompanying this article include the fragments of imitation marble revetment from the narthex. A reconstruction of this appears in *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, No. 3, 1946, fig. 151.

Technically, the fragments of the human figures are of great interest, particularly as they are unique examples of early Byzantine painting in Macedonia. In the most recent study of this subject, Maximović says:

> The frescoes have a dark red outline, sharply defined. Yet this is not solely linear painting. Inside the outlines the faces are modelled very freely. The effect of light and shade is obtained by colour contrasts: shadows are brown, sometimes emphasised by grey or violet-blue, whilst the light parts are painted in greenish or pink tones, with occasional white spots. This 'impressionist' technique of late antiquity, already known in early Christian catacomb painting, is here combined with a very marked outlining of head, nose and eyes.[1]

The Roman catacomb paintings with which the Stobi examples show similarities are all, however, considerably earlier. They also belong to a period when Oriental influences predominated in Christian Rome. The paintings in Sta Maria Antiqua, S. Saba and S. Paolo-fuori-le-Mura, which are nearer in time, use quite a different technique. A closer comparison is to be found in the fifth- to seventh-century icons of Sinai and still nearer are the many wall paintings that have been found at Dura Europos, a fact which, although the Dura Europos paintings, like most of the comparable examples in the Roman catacombs, are not later than the third century, argues Syrian influence. The sideways glance which is a characteristic of the heads is also found in the destroyed north aisle mosaics of St Demetrius in Thessalonica, and this may provide one clue to the route by which this Oriental influence arrived.

Maximović dates the Stobi paintings to about the end of the fifth or the beginning of the sixth century, that is to say after the sack by Theodoric in 479 and before the earthquake of 518. At this time it is probable that the church underwent a certain amount of reconstruction and the floor mosaics of the narthex may have been inserted about the same time.

No less individual are the capitals of the nave and galleries (Pl. 38). Of those from the two colonnades lining the nave, two have the Late Roman-Early Byzantine-type of fleshy leaved acanthus and a heavy, degenerated form of cyma, volutes and abacus. A second acanthus form is the thorny 'Theodosian' type. A third, of which one badly damaged example was found, seems to fall between the other two; it has a fleshy but denticulated leaf. Fourthly, we come to a capital, comprising two registers, where the denticulation of the leaves is so emphasised as to render them more like those of a fern than an acanthus. In the lower register the leaves are upright and curving outwards in the customary Corinthian manner, while in the upper the plants' long stems spiral against the surface of the capital in a manner reminiscent of a vine rather than either a fern or an acanthus.

The capitals of a fifth group depart still further from tradition. Their lower registers consist of either the thorny or the 'fern' acanthus, but above these are different and varied reliefs of animals and birds, the latter including peacocks and eagles. These are represented extremely naturally and are full of life and movement. One capital shows, for instance, a hunting scene in a forest with a hound attacking a deer. Trailing ivy branches are also a common feature. Lastly, we have a capital where the badly damaged lower register apparently consists of the earlier, fleshy acanthus, and the upper of four addorsed eagles with outspread wings, the tips of which just touch each other.

Some, at least, of the imposts above these capitals from the nave colonnades were carved with varied forms of fleshy acanthus leaves in low relief. Generally the style appears to have been formal and symmetrical, but in one case a most vivid impression is given of an acanthus bending before the force of a strong wind (Pl. 39 *j-l*).

The excavations also yielded eleven Ionic impost-capitals from the galleries. Only one of these may be regarded as completely finished. Some have no decoration at all, the others have either no or very little carving except on their fronts. Even this has not always been completed. In every case the main motif is the acanthus leaf, sometimes incorporating a cross in the centre of the principal face. As in the nave capitals, however, the artist or artists have exercised full freedom in their presentation of the acanthus. Sometimes, spreading realistically or sometimes arranged in a com-

[1] J. Maximović, *op. cit.* p. 212 (trans.).

pletely formal, stylised and symmetrical manner, each capital is an individual creation, quite distinct from the others. In one case even the Ionic base is replaced by one that is round (Pl. 39*a–i*).

While we know that the church was the foundation of a Bishop Philip, unfortunately we do not possess a full list of Stobi's bishops with their dates. On the evidence of the capitals, and to a certain extent on other sculptured fragments of parapets, the chancel screen and the platform of the ambo, the basilica has usually been dated to about the end of the fifth century or the first quarter of the sixth.[1] This has been revised by Strićević and Nikolajević-Stojković, who base their arguments in support of the second quarter of the fifth century on the large amount of new evidence with regard to Balkan sculptural decoration which has come to light in the course of the last three decades.[2]

It is impossible here to give an adequate review of the detailed arguments for and against the various dates. However, Sotiriou's researches into the basilica of St Demetrius in Thessalonica have incidentally shown that the links between the fifth-century sculptural decoration of this church and that of the Stobi episcopal basilica have not generally been given sufficient prominence. While, as Egger has pointed out, the fragment of the Stobi chancel screen may resemble in its decorative form one of the chancel slabs of S. Vitale, it is also closely related to fifth-century motifs in the sculptural art of St Demetrius.

Historical reasons can also be adduced in favour of a date around the second quarter of the fifth century. It was a time of peace and prosperity — except for brief, though savage, Hun invasions — maintained by the firm rule of Theodosius II (408–50), and one far more appropriate to the erection of a large and splendid basilica than any subsequent period. It was also a time when Thessalonica still retained the artistic leadership of Illyricum, a leadership that the troubles of the second half of the fifth century were to destroy, and which Constantinople was briefly to supersede during the last two-thirds of the sixth, before the whole region was overrun by the Slav invaders. This would explain the relationship of the sculpture in the Basilica of Bishop Philip with those of St Demetrius, built in the second decade of the fifth century.

Nikolajević-Stojković suggests that Bishop Philip may have been the predecessor of Bishop Nicolas, who is known to have attended the Council of Chalcedon in 451, but that Philip died before his church was finished. Under his successors it proceeded slowly and on a less splendid scale. Probably, as Egger suggests, the work was made possible by means of legacies and donations, which would help to explain the variety of workmanship and occasional use of inferior materials, including the substituting of wall paintings for mosaics.

11. THE CEMETERY BASILICA, STOBI (Pl. 37)

In 1918 a basilica was excavated in the western outskirts of Stobi. Consisting of a nave and two aisles, a

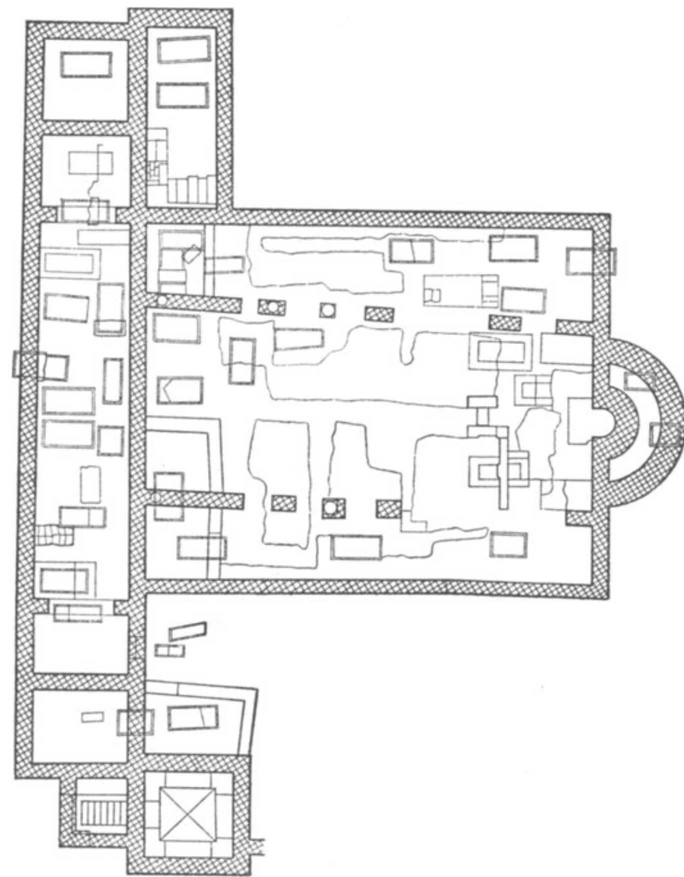


Fig. 77. CEMETERY BASILICA, STOBI. PLAN

[1] Arguments summarised by Kitzinger, *op. cit.* pp. 107–9, and by Nikolajević-Stojković, *op. cit.* p. 7 *et seq.*, p. 80 *et seq.*

[2] I. Nikolajevič-Stojković, *op. cit.* and G. Stričević, *Ranovisantiska Architektura u severnim provincijama Ilirika* (unpublished).

semicircular, protruding apse, a narthex and either an exonarthex or an atrium, it measured 29 metres long, including the apse and narthex, and 17 metres wide.

There are no indications of parabemata and the bema extended into the nave in Greco-Roman fashion. An unusual feature, however, was the existence of what appears to be a second, internal and concentric apse. Additional rooms were placed both north and south of the narthex. Fine floor mosaics found at the time of the excavations were unfortunately destroyed soon afterwards.

The church was built above existing graves, the vaults of which in some cases served as foundations.[1] A number of other graves were discovered close by. It seems probable, therefore, that the building may have served as the principal cemetery church for Stobi, and to this extent was linked to Bishop Philip's Basilica. In this case the 'double apse' may have possessed some special significance connected with this church's martyrium crypt.

The excavators considered this church to have been built in the fifth century, a date which subsequent research has left unchanged.

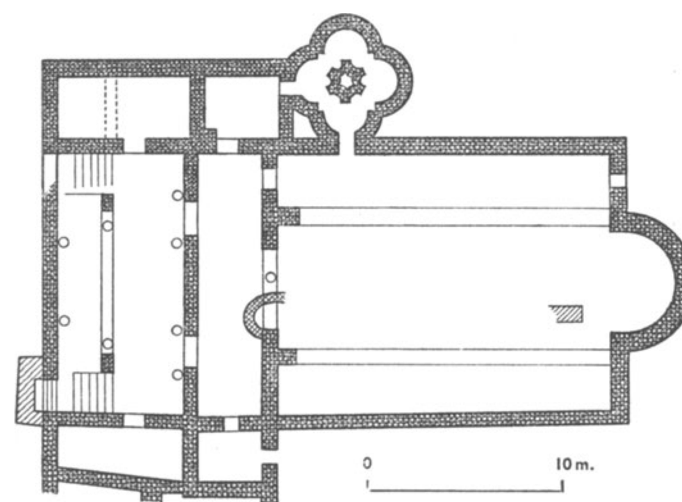


Fig. 78. QUATREFOIL BAPTISTERY BASILICA, STOBI. PLAN

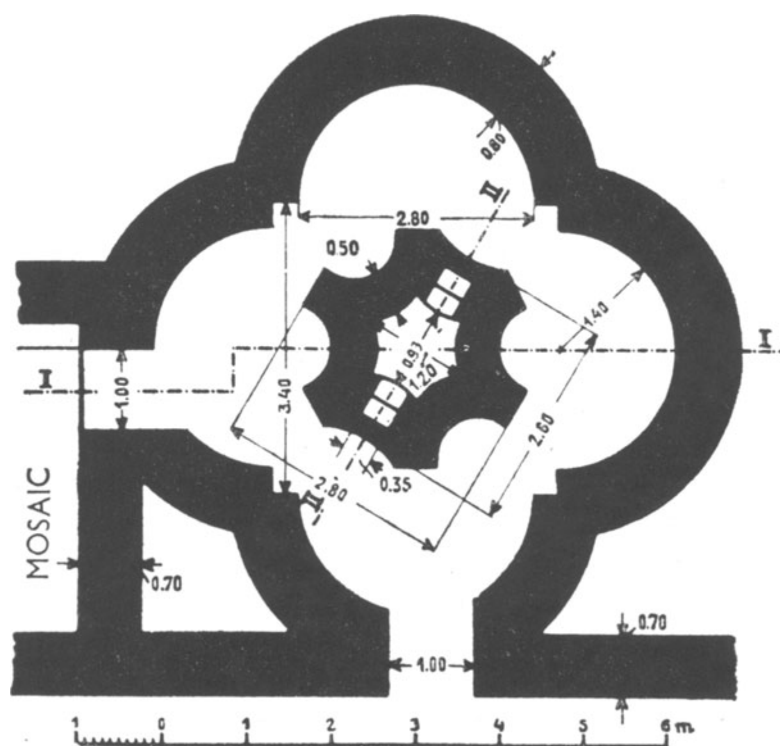


Fig. 79. QUATREFOIL BAPTISTERY BASILICA, STOBI
Plan of baptistery

12. THE QUATREFOIL BAPTISTERY BASILICA, STOBI (Pls. 37, 52)

In 1937 a basilica was discovered and partially excavated within the walls of Stobi. Standing some thirty metres to the north of the 'Synagogue' Basilica in the same street, it possessed a quatrefoil baptistery joined to a room north of the narthex and the north aisle.[2]

Two flights of steps descended a steep drop from the street level to a colonnade forming the west front of the church's exonarthex. In front of this colonnade water gushed from a spring into a basin and performed the function of the ceremonial fountain usually placed in the atrium. Marble-lined niches were found beside the pool. Two doorways led from the exonarthex into the narthex, which, in turn, had three entrances into the nave and aisles. The exact disposition of these entrances is not clear.

[1] J. Petrović, 'U Stobima Danas' ('Stobi Today'), *Glasnik Hrvatskih Zemaljskih Muzeja u Sarajevu*, 1942 (Croatian).

(Following new excavations in 1936, an account of this church was also written by C. Truhelka in *Glasnik Skopskog Naučnog Društva*, iii, 61, but I have not had an opportunity of consulting this. Pre-1940 references appear at the end of E. Kitzinger's Survey of 'The Early Christian Town of Stobi' in *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, No. 3 — R. F. H.)

[2] J. Petrović, 'The Baptisteries of Stobi', *Umetnički Pregled*, 9 (Belgrade, Nov. 1940), pp. 263-7 (Serbian); 'U Stobima Danas' ('Stobi Today'), *Glasnik Hrvatskih Zemaljskih Muzeja u Sarajevu*, 1942 (Croatian), pp. 463–525.



a.



c.



b.



d.

FRAGMENTS OF WALL PAINTINGS FROM THE NARTHEX



a. Fragment of wall painting from the narthex

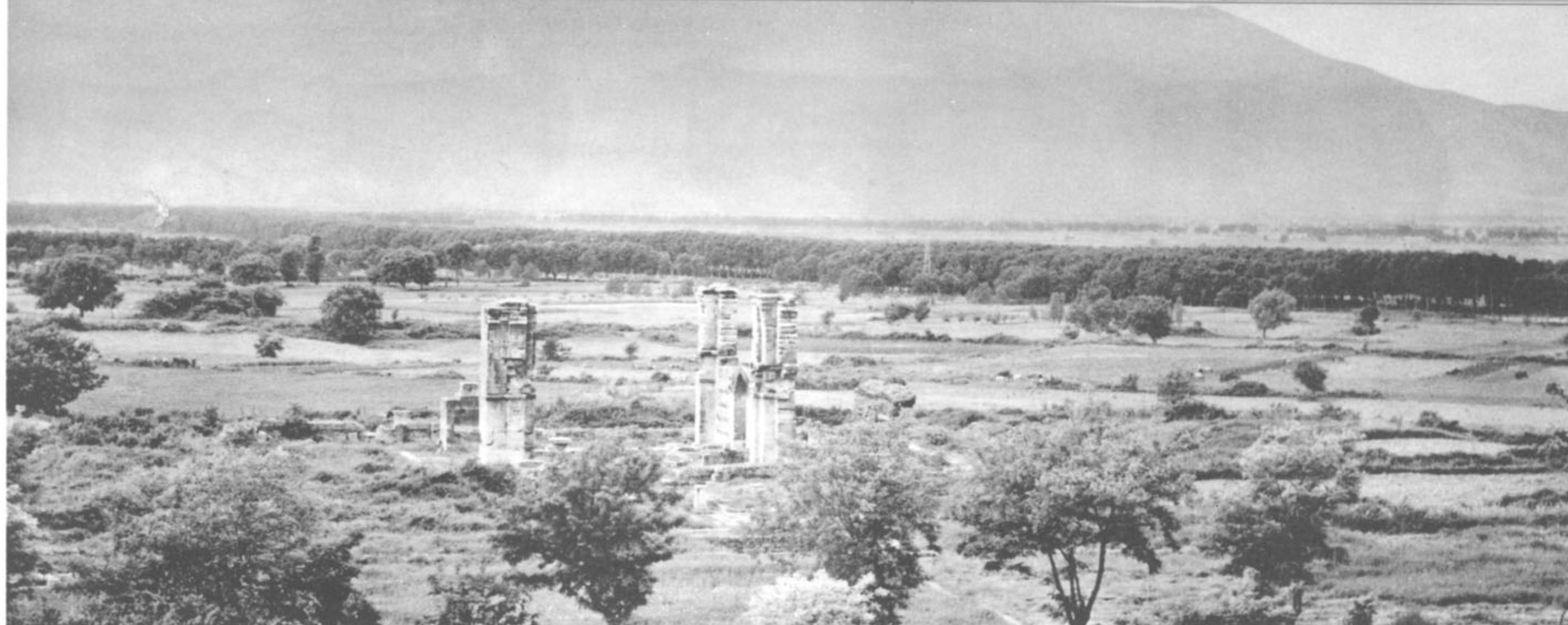
44 BASILICA OF BISHOP PHILIP. STOBI

b. Fragment of wall painting from the narthex



c. Fragment of wall painting from the nave





View from the foot of the Acropolis across the Plain of Philippi to the slopes of Mount Pangaeus. In the foreground, the apse, transept and sanctuary of Basilica A; beyond them, the ruins of Basilica B.

45 THE PLAIN OF PHILIPPI



a. Nave capital



b. Diaconicon capital

c. Angle capital from nave colonnade.

46 BASILICA A, PHILIPPI

The main body of the basilica consisted of a nave and two aisles and a semicircular, protruding apse. The arrangement of the sanctuary must await further investigation, but the preliminary report speaks of loose tesserae from a mosaic floor. Side-chambers were built to the north and south of both narthex and exonarthex. In the room north of the narthex portions of the original mosaic floor were uncovered. Squares enclosed within 'rope' borders display in one a chalice, in another a sack or basket of fruit, and in others various birds. The pattern is similar to that in a room in the neighbouring 'Summer Palace', but in artistry and in execution it is definitely inferior. In addition to the door opening from the narthex, another, in the east wall, led from this room into a quatrefoil-shaped baptistery, with a piscina covered by a ciborium. Persons about to be baptised could, therefore, have awaited the rite in the anteroom to the west of the baptistery. After baptism, a doorway connecting the baptistery and the north aisle would have given them direct access into the church.

The single semicircular apse is a Greco-Roman feature and conforms with other Stobi basilicas. On the other hand, the side chambers of the narthex and the exonarthex are among the indications of Anatolian influence that appeared during the reign of Justinian. The quatrefoil apse, moreover, recalls the inscribed quatrefoil of the Episcopal Church of Caričin Grad, to which, if Caričin Grad was indeed Justiniana Prima, Stobi was made ecclesiastically dependent in the sixth century.

At this period a baptistery could only be an adjunct of an episcopal church. Consequently, this basilica must either have preceded or followed Bishop Philip's basilica as the episcopal church of Stobi. Its east end and general form of construction suggest a fifth- rather than a sixth-century date, but this is contradicted by the annexes of the narthex which may, however, be later additions. The possibility therefore exists that this basilica was Stobi's episcopal church until the building of the great new basilica of Bishop Philip and that it reverted to its status in the sixth century after the earthquake of 518 had shattered the new basilica. The baptistery may have been reconstructed at this time. However, in view of its relationship with the basilica at Tumba on the one hand and with those at Studenčišta and Radolišta on the other, a late fifth- or early sixth-century date seems most likely.

13. THE BASILICA A, PHILIPPI (Pls. 45-47)

In the fifth century a great new transept basilica was built within the walls of Philippi. Lemerle has given us a scholarly and comprehensive account of all that archaeological excavations and historical research can tell us of this church.[1] Nevertheless, we still have no clue to its dedication and it has therefore been named Basilica A, to distinguish it from the similarly anonymous Basilica B, erected farther to the south in the sixth century.

For a city of such prominence in the early history of Christianity, a prominence that is substantiated by the magnificence of the churches which have been excavated, we know remarkably little of the story of Philippi. A third-century epitaph of a foreign visitor describes the city as 'crowned with beautiful walls'. That these walls were also exceptionally strong we know from the fact that, by 473, it alone of the cities of Thrace and neighbouring parts of Macedonia had been able to withstand the assaults and sieges of the Gothic armies of Theodoric Strabo. It seems evident that the defensive qualities of these walls were maintained throughout at least the first half of the sixth century, since Procopius omits to mention Philippi in his list of fortifications repaired and strengthened by Justinian.

Although Philippi was a lesser city than Thessalonica, Basilica A was scarcely smaller than St Demetrius and larger than 'Acheiropoietos'. The interior length of the nave and aisles was 41·60 metres. The addition of the depth of the apse brought this to 47 metres and, with the narthex, a total length of 55 metres was reached. The nave was 14 metres across, the aisles 5·10 metres. The complete interior width, including the nave stylobates, was 27·60 metres. In the transept it was 39·50 metres.

The basilica lies, with little more than its foundations remaining, on the north side of the Via Egnatia,

[1] P. Lemerle, *Philippes et la Macédoine Orientale* (Paris, 1945).

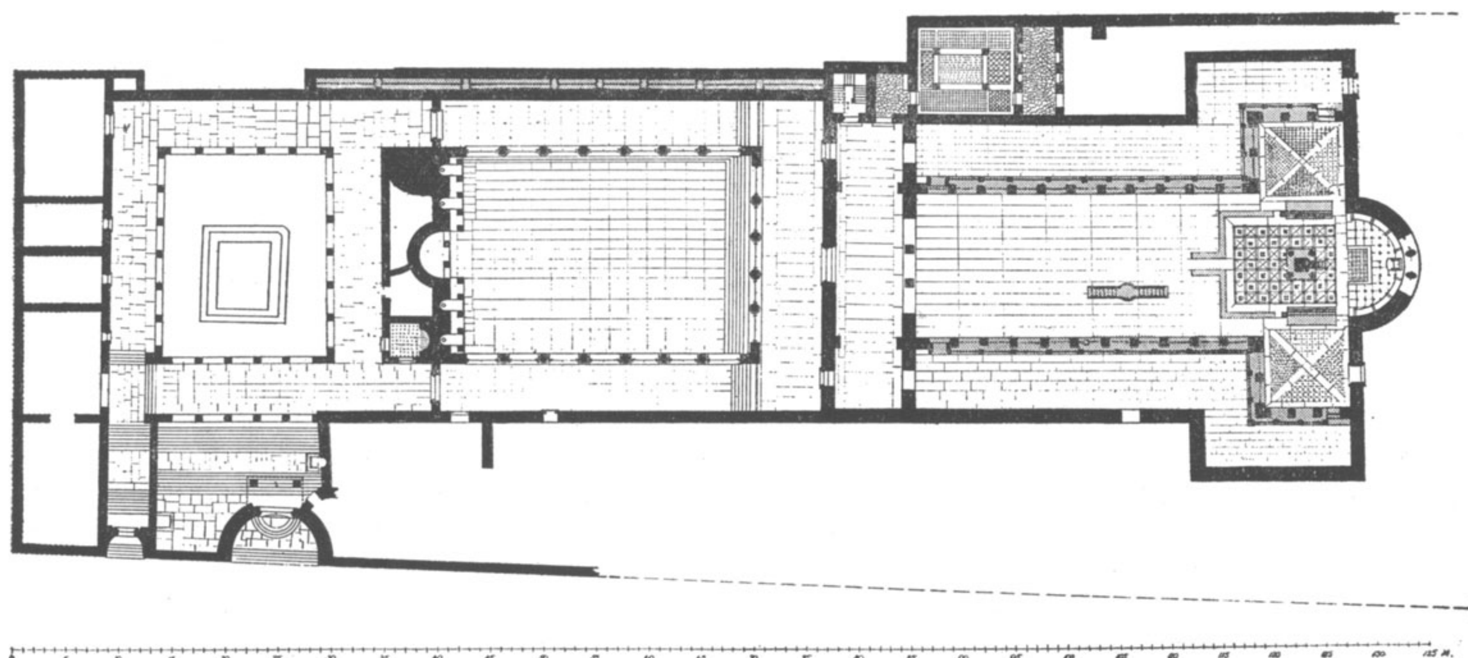


Fig. 80. BASILICA A, PHILIPPI. PLAN

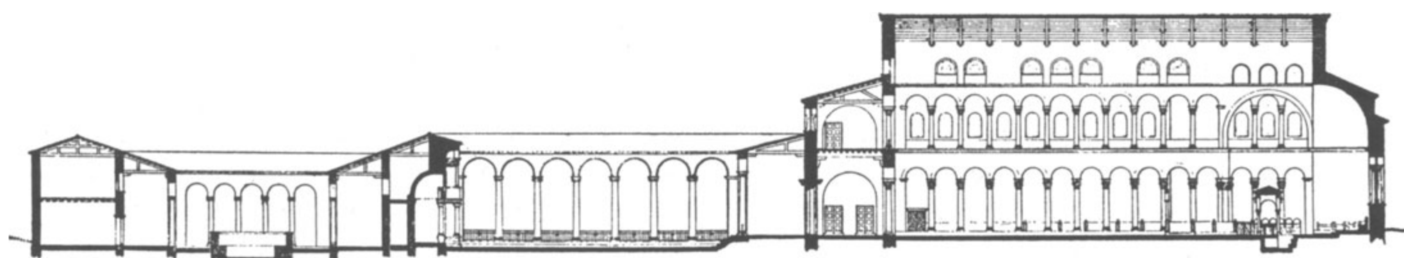


Fig. 81. BASILICA A, PHILIPPI. SECTION. (Reconstruction by Lemerle)

opposite the Roman forum. The complete architectural ensemble began with a propylaeum leading from the Via Egnatia into a colonnaded courtyard enclosing a cistern, the traditional site of the prison of Paul and Silas. East of this courtyard and entered through two doorways, extended the atrium, lined with colonnades on three sides and, on the west, facing the narthex, having a two-storied portico, recalling the mosaic façades in the dome of St George. In the centre of the portico was a large recess, or exedra, the ceiling of which projected into the second storey and, on either side, symmetrically arranged, two niches containing fountains. Three doorways led into the narthex, from which a tribelon opened into the nave and two side entrances into the aisles of the church.

A rectangular room possessing a black-and-white tiled floor (Pl. 47*b*) was annexed to the north aisle but without an intercommunicating doorway. It was entered from the narthex through a small anteroom. Hitherto, this annexe has been considered a baptistery, with the reservation that no evidence of the piping of water could be found. Pelekanides's discovery of a similarly sited and planned annexe in the 'Extra Muros' Basilica now offers a more satisfactory explanation. In all probability this was built as a form of diaconicon (cum prothesis ?) from which the bread and wine were taken through the tribelon and nave to the sanctuary.

The church itself was a T-transept basilica, with a semicircular, protruding apse. Galleries ran above the aisles and narthex. Clerestory lighting below the low pitched timber roof, windows behind the galleries and narthex, and a triple window in the apse flooded the church with daylight in typically Hellenistic manner. As in St Demetrius, the nave colonnades entered the transept, then turned right angles outwards

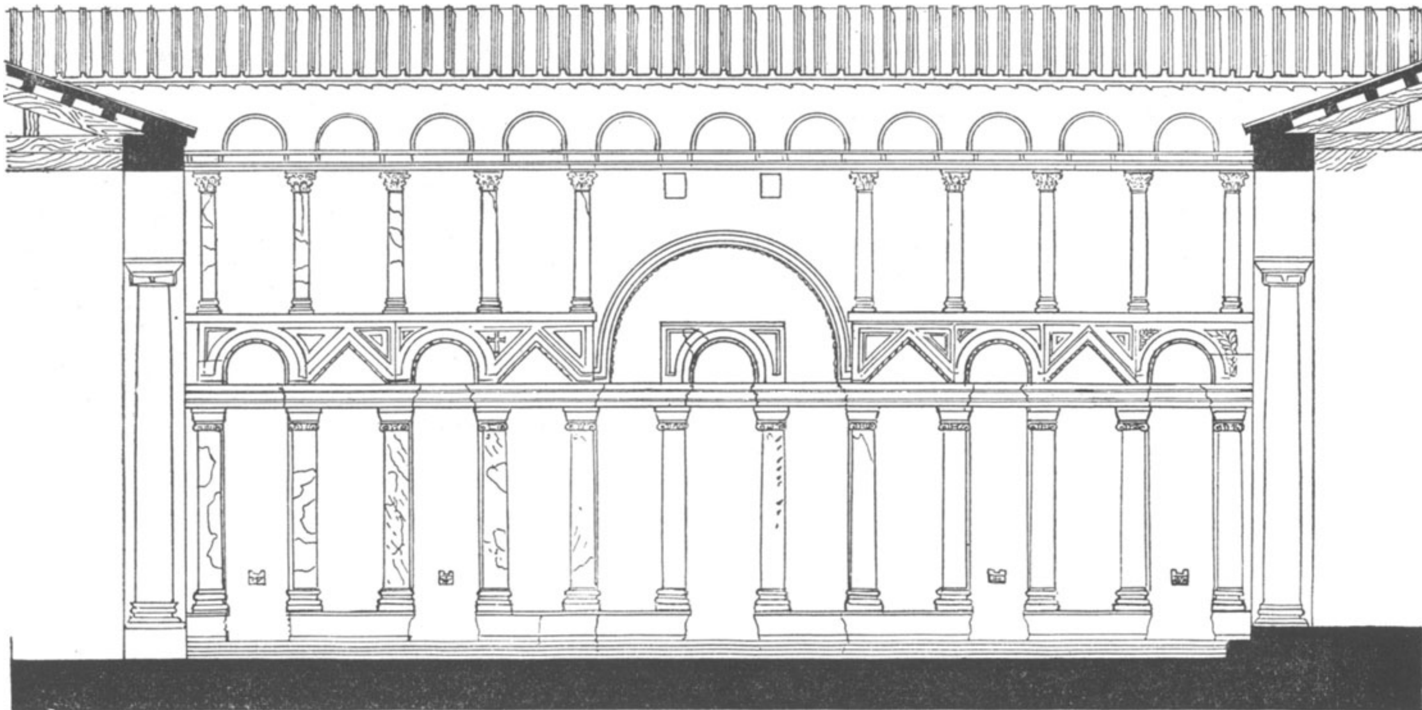


Fig. 82. BASILICA A, PHILIPPI. WESTERN END OF THE ATRIUM. (Reconstruction after Lemerle)

as far as the projections of the walls of the aisles. From here, however, they extended directly to the east wall of the transept, which was considerably shallower than that of St Demetrius.

The plan of the sanctuary was very similar to that of St Demetrius, and, like it, lay within the transept. It consisted of three clearly defined areas. The bema, in the middle, extending westwards from the chord of the apse, was enclosed partly by presbytery benches ranged opposite each other and partly by a low chancel screen. It was flanked by two square enclosures, or parabemata, a tripartite division which was further emphasised by separate zones of coloured marble pavement, laid in geometric designs. Probably these parabemata were for the use of the deacons in the performance of their offices. Yet although possessing no prothesis functions their presence unquestionably represents a step towards the introduction of pastophoria. Again like St Demetrius, a small, shallow reliquary crypt occupied the exact centre of the transept.

An important feature, paralleled in the Episcopal Church at Stobi, was the use of double stylobates. These were an integral part of the colonnades separating the nave and aisles, and continued with them into the transept. The two main stylobates, more than a metre wide and standing half a metre above the floor, served as bases for the massive columns flanking the nave and supporting the galleries. Lemerle points out that they were constructed of blocks of stone taken from earlier Roman buildings. Joined on to their outer sides was a second stylobate, less than half the width, but nearly twice the height of the first. This second stylobate, moreover, supported a screen composed of carved marble slabs held by mullion-type pillars. The whole structure formed a solid wall, 1 metre 70 centimetres high, that is to say, approximately the height of a man. Except for narrow openings at each end, it effectively divided the nave and sanctuary from the aisles. Curtains, necessary during the liturgy in a church like St Demetrius, but which would have detracted from that architectural unity which was the keynote of Basilica A, were thus avoided.

From his intensive study of Basilica A, Lemerle has given us this impression of its interior:

> Two words, which are only apparently contradictory, sum up the decoration of the basilica ; it is at the same time luxurious and plain. Luxurious because of the material used and this profusion of beautiful slabs of imported marble for wall and floor covering ; luxurious again in relation to the custom of the time, because all the elements of the order, bases, columns, capitals, imposts were specially ordered for the basilica, mostly from distant workshops and there was no

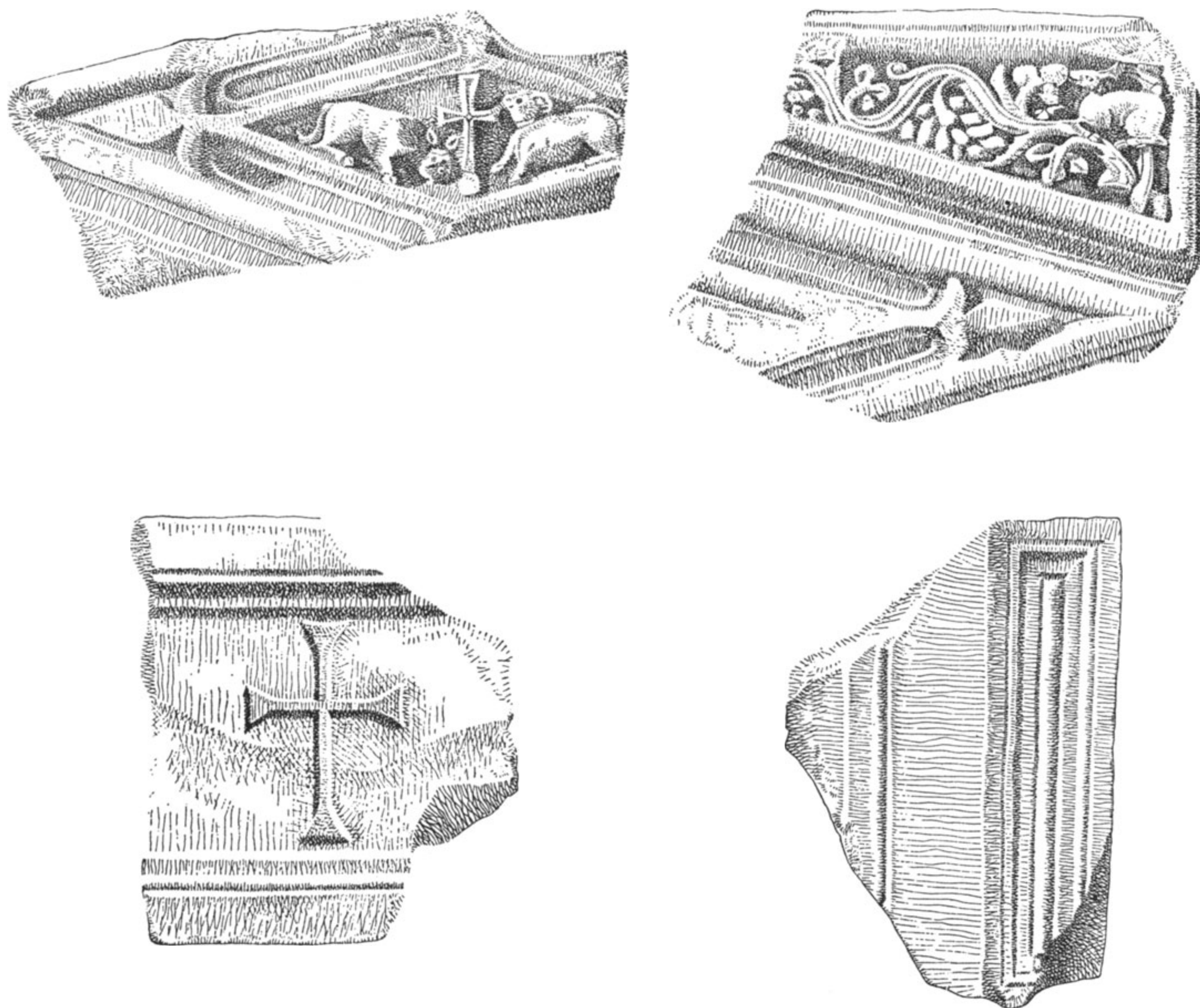


Fig. 83. BASILICA A, PHILIPPI. Sculptured fragments of slabs

question of their being second-hand: luxurious, finally, because of the richer decoration of certain parts, such as the west door of the atrium or the sanctuary. But the builders, although clearly they had great resources at their command, knew how to overcome the temptation to sacrifice simplicity of line to opulence or variety of decoration. There was no heedless use of coloured marbles, which were kept for special purposes, related to the function of certain parts of the building. There was none of that luxuriant sculpture which, instead of emphasising, obscures the constructive function of the parts it covers. There was no wall or floor mosaic to distract the eye and hide the structure. Nor was there any attempt to bring an artificial diversity into elements all fulfilling the same role. On the contrary, unity of function was emphasised by unity of decoration. One type of capital sufficed for the nave, another for the tribunes, and there were only two types of chancel slab. Unity, sobriety, subordination to contructional or functional purpose, such are the principles of what may rightly be called an architectural decoration. They are also those which the Greek tradition had given to antique art.[1]

The floor of the nave was constructed of slabs of white Proconnesian marble and the same material was used for the walls. The columns were similarly of white marble, except in positions of particular liturgical importance, such as the west portico of the atrium, where green Thessalian marble was used. This marble appeared, too, mixed with grey and black, in the

[1] P. Lemerle, *op. cit.* pp. 396–7 (trans.).



DETAIL FROM THE APSE MOSAIC, CHRIST IN GLORY

VI CHAPEL OF HOSIOS DAVID, THESSALONICA

sanctuary, and was used for the altar and its ciborium. It is probable that a large slab of grey marble surmounted the tribelon. Only in such unimportant parts of the church as the small antechamber to the diaconicon was the high standard of decoration allowed to lapse and coloured stucco introduced to imitate marble revetments.

Lemerle comments that the Christian monuments of Philippi's early Byzantine period outshine in every way the undistinguished buildings of its Roman era. It cannot be doubted that this was mainly due to the particular importance that accrued to the city through its connection with St Paul. For at least two centuries after the decline of the Via Egnatia and the commercial prosperity that had been based upon it, Philippi was able to switch its economy to that of a pilgrimage centre, and wax wealthy on the proceeds. Thus can the erection of such a large and magnificent basilica in a relatively small centre become explicable.

Largely on the evidence of the Corinthian type of plain acanthus capitals, Lemerle has proposed the end of the fifth century, or about 500, as the probable date of construction of this basilica. However, the capitals may also be regarded as evidence of an earlier date. They are closely similar to capitals in the Basilica of Bishop Philip at Stobi (Pl. 38*a*). Those of Philippi are particularly finely executed and by no means degenerate as one would expect from late examples of the type. Moreover, it seems hardly likely that a basilica which used nothing but the best materials, and which was planned in a manner so masterly as to imply the hand of a major architect from Constantinople or another leading city of the empire, would not have used capitals then being developed in Constantinople instead of ones which were already or were becoming old-fashioned.

Historically, too, the late fifth century is unlikely. The seventh decade of this century, it will be recalled, was, even by Balkan standards, one of exceptional violence. Nicopolis had been sacked by the Vandals and, in course of internecine Gothic wars and revolts against the imperial authority, a similar fate had befallen Stobi and many other leading Macedonian and Thracian cities. It is quite likely that, in the course of Theodoric Strabo's attacks on Philippi about the year 473, the 'Extra Muros' church, standing some little way outside the walls, had been rendered unsafe of access for considerable periods and may have suffered damage. Although such circumstances might have been reason enough to re-site the city's principal church within the impregnable confines of the walls, on the other hand the latter part of the century was still an unpropitious time for the building of a new basilica on so great a scale. In consequence, as with the Church of Bishop Philip at Stobi, the second quarter of the fifth century seems probable.

Nevertheless, all this must remain conjecture. As Lemerle says: 'no Christian inscription, carved in stone or designed in mosaic, has been found in the basilica. No historical text makes any mention of the monument.' It seems, though, that Basilica A did not stand for long, and that some violent catastrophe, probably an earthquake, destroyed it. It may have been the same earthquake which reduced Scupi (Skopje) to rubble in 518, or it may have occurred earlier. Some time near the middle of the second half of the sixth century Basilica B was erected. Philippi possessed several other churches, but one surmises that this was built as the new Episcopal Church to replace the splendid edifice which had been suddenly shattered. The superb site, at the foot of the acropolis that even to-day is still riddled with the sanctuaries of the ancient pagan gods, was left deserted and the new church was erected some distance away, where the city extends into the plain. In the sixth century Christianity, though the imperial faith, was still relatively young. The ancient gods of Samothrace and Thasos, the god of Mount Pangaeus, had still not long been vanquished.[1] One cannot help wondering if the Philippians had reasons, which perhaps they hardly cared to acknowledge, for removing the site of their ill-fated cathedral to a greater distance from the acropolis.

14. THE CHAPEL OF HOSIOS DAVID, THESSALONICA

(Pls. I, VI–VIII, 48, 49)

Reluctantly, we must reject the attractive legend related by Ignatius which attributes the building of at

[1] P. Collart, *Philippes, ville de Macédoine depuis ses origines jusqu'à la fin de l'époque romaine* (Paris, 1937).

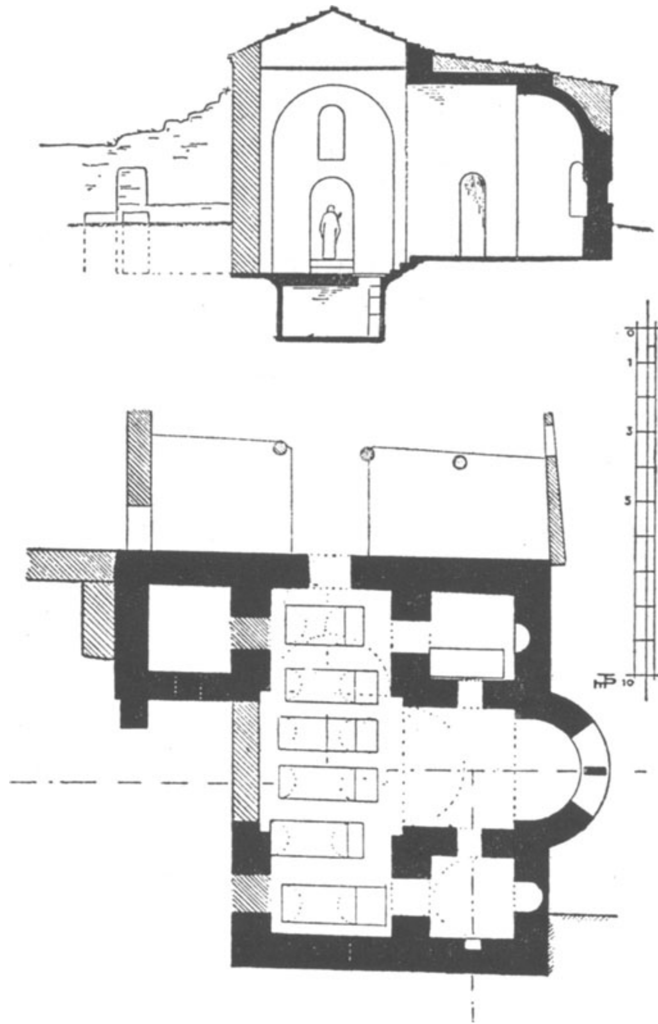


Fig. 84. CHAPEL OF HOSIOS DAVID, THESSALONICA
Section and plan of present structure

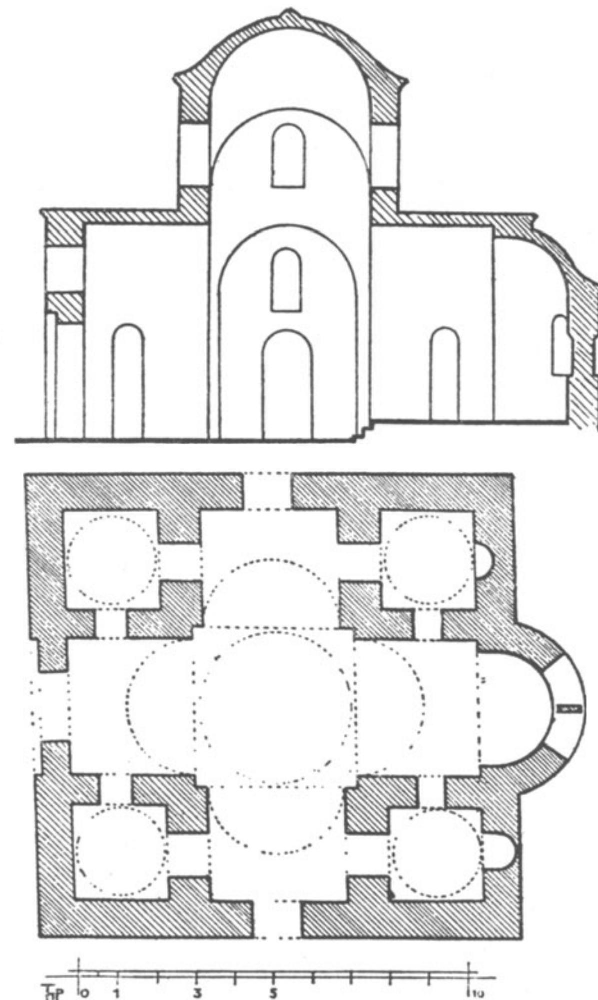


Fig. 85. CHAPEL OF HOSIOS DAVID, THESSALONICA. Section and plan of original building. (Reconstruction by Pelekanides)

least part of the small church of Hosios David to the daughter of Galerius (see page 69). Archaeology has established with reasonable certainty that, as Ignatius tells us, it was the catholicon, or chapel of the monastery of the Prophet Zechariah, but that it was constructed, probably towards the end of the fifth century, on the site of a Roman temple. The other parts of the monastery, more commonly known as Moni Latomos, the Monastery of the Quarrymen, have long been demolished, and only about two-thirds of the original church remains to-day. During the period of Turkish domination it was converted into a mosque. It was not reconsecrated until 1921, when, in the course of cleaning and redecoration, the mosaic described by Ignatius was again revealed.[1]

Tucked away among the houses and narrow streets near the northern ramparts of Thessalonica, this truncated little fifth-century chapel houses one of the most beautiful of Early Byzantine mosaics and also is of considerable architectural importance. In its original state, it was a square building, with a single, semicircular, protruding apse pierced by a double window. The interior presented a radical change from the basilical construction of Thessalonica's earlier churches. The ground plan was an inscribed cross or 'cross in square', consisting of the four equal arms of a Greek cross, the eastern having the projecting apse, with four square chambers occupying the corners, each opening into the adjoining arms of the 'cross'. A central dome, built square externally, and now lacking, was based upon the four angle piers. The corner chambers had domed ceilings. These were not projected beyond the sloping exterior of the roof, which simply indicated

[1] A. Xyngopoulos, ΤΟ ΚΑΘΟΛΙΚΟΝ ΤΗΣ ΜΟΝΟΗΣ ΛΑΤΟΜΟΥ ΕΝ ΘΕΣΣΑΛΟΝΙΚΗΙ, ΑΡΧ. ΔΕΛΤ. 12 (1929), p. 142 *et seq.*



VII CHAPEL OF HOSIOS DAVID, THESSALONICA

DETAIL FROM THE APSE MOSAIC, EZEKIEL

the directions of the barrel-vaulted ceilings of the arms of the 'cross'.

Hosios David is one of the earliest known appearances in Europe of this architectural form which Byzantine church architecture was later to develop. Grabar suggests that, as a memorial chapel to the Prophet Zechariah, whose cult was widespread in the fifth century, Hosios David followed the cruciform plan of the eastern martyrium.[1] He cites the Church of the Prophets (461–5) at Gerasa, in Palestine, as demonstrating that by the mid-fifth century the inscribed cross had already reached an advanced state of development in Syria. It is similarly true that the cruciform church — not inscribed — was a popular Eastern Anatolian plan for the memorial chapel.[2] As the Anatolian churches, unlike the Syrian, were not accustomed to have parabemata, this difference is less significant than would at first seem. In any case the general Oriental origins of the cruciform martyrium, whether inscribed or not, are unquestionable.

The church is the first of which we know in Macedonia to have two clearly defined chambers flanking the bema. This uncompromising acceptance of the Oriental form of sanctuary may or may not have been partly a reflection of the contemporary weakness of the Latin West. Certainly, since Hosios David was built as a monastery chapel its similarity to the monastic churches of the Tur Abdin (Fig. 15) suggests links with Northern Mesopotamia additional to those already noted in connection with the 'Extra Muros' Basilica, Philippi, and in the basilica at Tumba.

[1] A. Grabar, *Martyrium* (Paris, 1946), vol. 1, p. 164.

[2] W. Ramsay and G. L. Bell, *The Thousand and One Churches* (London, 1909), pp. 340 ff.

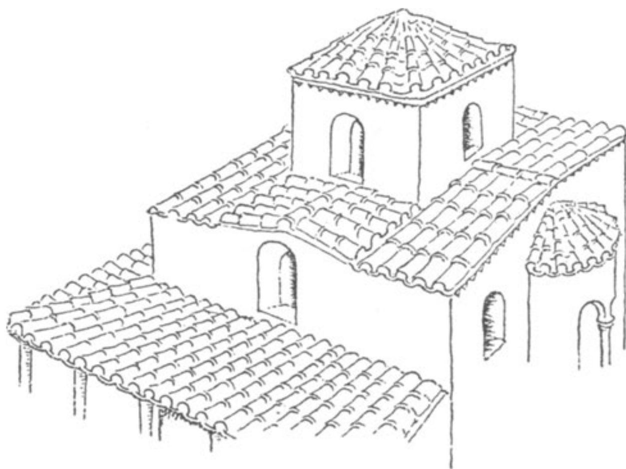


Fig. 86. CHAPEL OF HOSIOS DAVID, THESSALONICA. Original structure of roof. (Reconstruction after Pelekanides)

The mosaic described by Ignatius occupies the upper part of the apse. It represents, according to Ignatius, the visions of Ezekiel and Habakkuk. Christ appears in a mandorla of glory enthroned upon a rainbow, with symbolical representations of the four evangelists in attendance. In chapters i and ii of the Book of Ezekiel, Ezekiel relates:

> And I looked, and behold, a whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud, and a fire infolding itself, and a brightness was about it, and out of the midst thereof came the likeness of four living creatures. . . .
>
> . . . And as for the likeness of their faces, they four had the face of a man, and the face of a lion, on the right side: and they four had the face of an ox on the left side; they four also had the face of an eagle. . . .
>
> . . . And above the firmament . . . was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone; and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it.
>
> And I saw as the colour of amber, as the appearance of fire round about within it, from the appearance of his loins even upward, and from the appearance of his loins even downward, I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and it had brightness round about.
>
> As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. And when I saw it, I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of one that spake. . . .
>
> . . . And when I looked, behold, an hand was sent unto me; and, lo, a roll of a book was therein;
>
> And he spread it before me; and it was written within and without; and there was written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe.

Ezekiel himself is shown in the left-hand corner of the composition, a bowed figure, his hands raised. He is listening, although his gaze is averted from the vision. Behind him appears a landscape of wooded hills and, in the far distance, the towers and roofs of the Chaldaean city of the Israelite exile, a scene which recalls the 'Egyptian landscapes' of Pompeii. In the opposite corner Habakkuk sits at the foot of a mountain, an open book, the writing upon which is difficult to make out, resting on his knee, in an attitude of deep meditation. Springing from beneath the feet of Christ are

the waters of the Jordan, rich with fish, and from which spring the four rivers of Paradise. To the left the awestruck figure of a pagan river god half emerges from the Jordan.

Christ, youthful and unbearded, is seated in the centre of a rainbow, the colours radiating from Him like the spokes of a wheel to form a circular mandorla. A jewelled cross ornaments His halo. His right arm is raised, hand outstretched, His left holds an open scroll. The four symbols of the evangelists, a man, a lion, an eagle and an ox, each with their gospel, appear from behind the mandorla, indicating, incidentally, its translucent nature in contrast to the normally opaque clipeus.

Although the mosaic may be interpreted as representing the visions of Ezekiel and Habakkuk, its spirit is entirely that of the New Testament. The scroll Christ holds in His left hand carries no message of 'lamentations, and mourning, and woe'. On the contrary, it may be translated as, 'Behold our God in Whom we hope and here rejoice in our salvation, for He will give us rest and hospitality in this house', possibly a paraphrase of Isaiah xxv, verses 9 and 10. Christ Himself is not the Old Testament, Hebrew God of Wrath, who, in Habakkuk's words, 'didst march through the land in indignation' and 'didst thresh the heathen in anger'.[1] Instead, His expression of an understanding seemingly beyond human comprehension combines a sublime detachment from the world of material strife and temptation with an infinite compassion.

The unbearded Christ, a version popular in the fifth and sixth century in Italy, Istria and Egypt, is certainly a basically different conception from the bearded, 'Syrian' Christ that succeeded it in Christian art; but a comparison of the Hosios David mosaic with various of its Western contemporaries clearly indicates the existence between them of fundamental spiritual differences. The church of Hosios David was a monastic establishment, erected during a long, seemingly unending period of insecurity, including the calamitous break-up of the entire Roman Empire in the West and even the sack and barbarian occupation of its ancient, imperial capital. In such times Christianity brought a message of hope and reassurance that spiritual faith would eventually triumph over the material forces of evil. Habakkuk had said:

> I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved. And the Lord answered me, and said 'Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry. Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith!'[2]

Belief that 'the just shall live by his faith' was a fundamental factor in the development of the monasticism then spreading from Egypt to all parts of the troubled Christian world. Monasticism, though first adapted to Christianity in Egypt, was not of Egyptian but of Indian Buddhist origin. It is not, therefore, surprising that in many cases the Hosios David Christ displays closer affinities with Gandhara and even Mathura Buddhas than with its approximately contemporary Western conceptions of Christ (Plates 48, 49). As we have seen, this was by no means an isolated example of Buddhist impact on Early Christian thought. The coins of such late Indo-Bactrian kings as Amyntas and Hermaios, showing Zeus enthroned in an almost identical posture, show the enduring cultural links established by Alexander between Macedonia and India in even sharper relief (Fig. 87).

With this in mind, we must consider the position of Christ's right hand. With the palm outstretched, it is the Roman gesture of allocution. It is also, however, the Semitic sign of divine reassurance or salvation and the Buddhist *abtaya mudra* or gesture of reassurance, although an orthodox representation of Buddha would bring the arm closer to the body. The gesture is, in fact, relatively common in the Christian art of Europe of the late fourth, fifth and sixth centuries. Italy, France and the Balkans were regions where reassurance was one of the qualities which men sought most anxiously from the Christian faith. Thus we find this gesture, in its Christian and Western form possessing additional positiveness that was its Roman

[1] Habakkuk iii, 12.

[2] Habakkuk ii, 1-4.



a. Atrium capital



b. Base and capital of Diaconicon pier

47 BASILICIA A, PHILIPPI



c. Stylobate and angle column base of nave colonnade

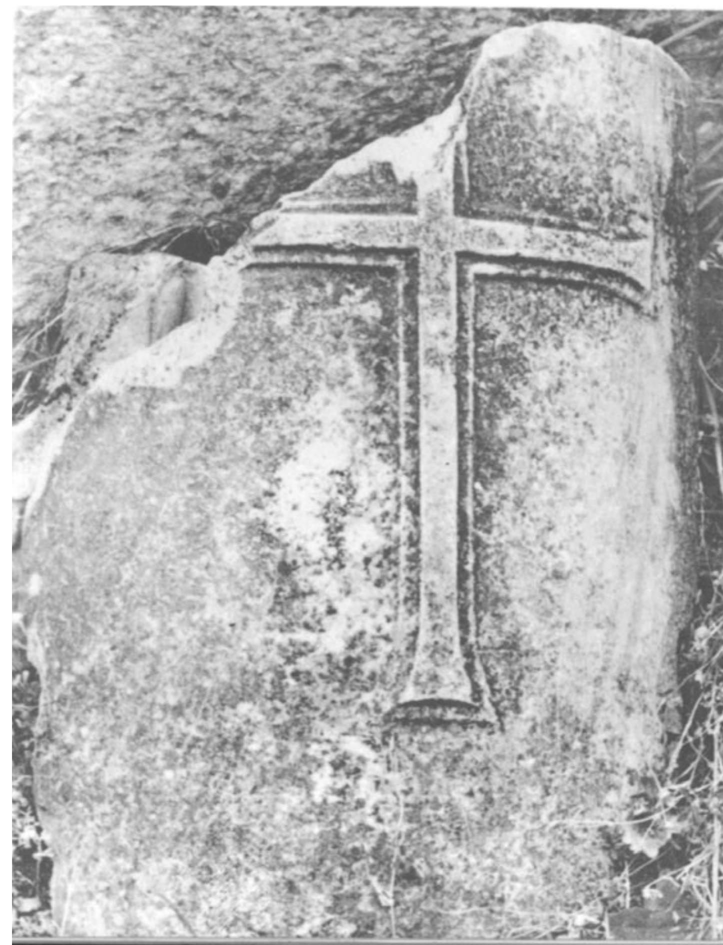


d. Peacocks at the Source of Life. Behind the peacocks are stylised Trees of Life

f. Fragment of column shaft from nave

e. Fragment of chancel slab





a. Apse mosaic: 'The Vision of Ezekiel'



b. Detail of the apse mosaic: The head of Christ



c. Head of Buddha. *Guides' Mess, Hoti-Mardan*



d. Head of Buddha. *Museum of Eastern Art, Oxford*



e. Head of Buddha. *Christie, Manson and Woods Ltd., London*



f. Head of Buddha. *Victoria and Albert Museum, London*

48 CHAPEL OF HOSIOS DAVID, THESSALONICA

49 OTHER CIRCA FIFTH OR FIRST HALF OF THE SIXTH CENTURY PORTRAITS OF THE YOUTHFUL, UNBEARDED CHRIST


a. Chapel of S. Aquilino, S. Lorenzo, Milan


b. 'Mausoleum of Galla Placidia', Ravenna


c. Entrance to the Archipiscopal Chapel, Ravenna


d. Ceiling of the Archipiscopal Chapel, Ravenna


e. Apse, S. Vitale, Ravenna


f. Above the main apse, Euphrasiana Basilica, Poreć


g. South apse, Euphrasiana Basilica, Poreć


h. Sta. Maria-in-Canneto, Pula


i. Wooden door of Sta. Sabina, Rome


j. Exuperantius sarcophagus, Ravenna


k. Chapel XVII, Apollo monastery, Bawit


l. Catacomb of Massimo, Rome


m. Ivory, Barberini diptych, Louvre, Paris


n. Ivory, Murano diptych, National Museum, Ravenna

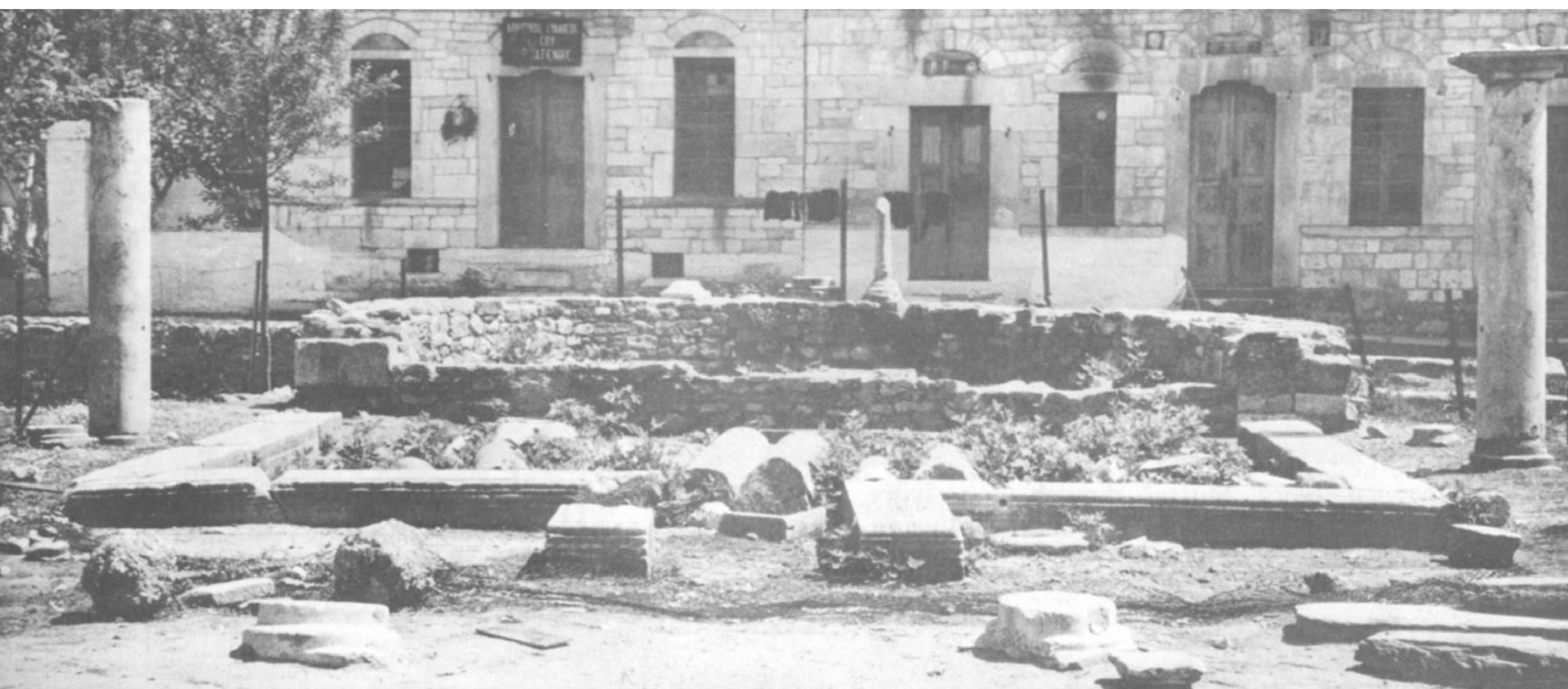

o. Ivory, Pyx, Cluny Museum, Paris


p. Ivory, Cathedra of Maximianus, Archipiscopal Museum, Ravenna

a. Apse. View of exterior from north east.

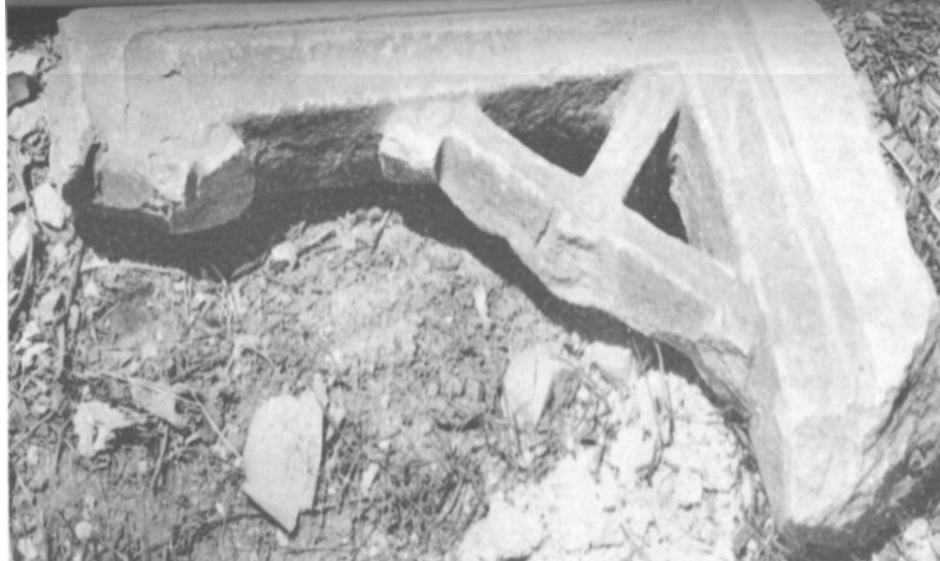
50 CRUCIFORM BASILICA. THASOS

b. Apse and chancel stylobates from the west





a. Fragments of a pillar and slab from the chancel screen



b. Fragment of an open-work slab



c. Detail of the apse with remnants of the windows



d. Stylobates of the chancel screen at the entrance into the nave

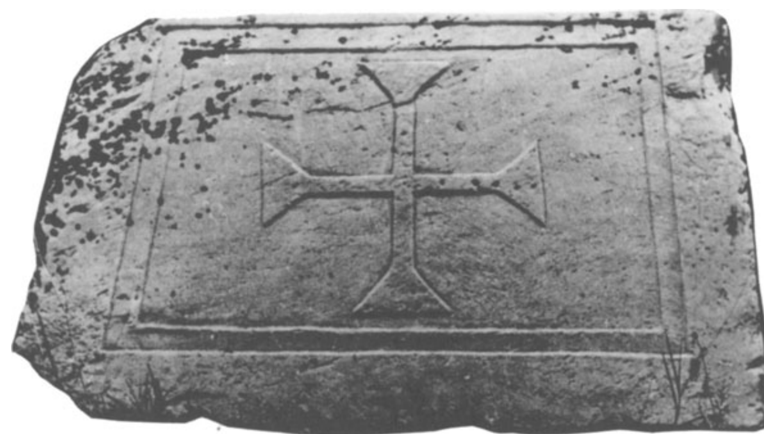


e. Pillar, complete with its base and capital, from the nave

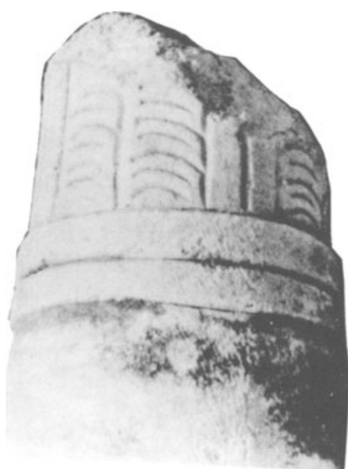
51 CRUCIFORM BASILICA, THASOS



a. Chancel screen Slab



b. Chancel screen slab

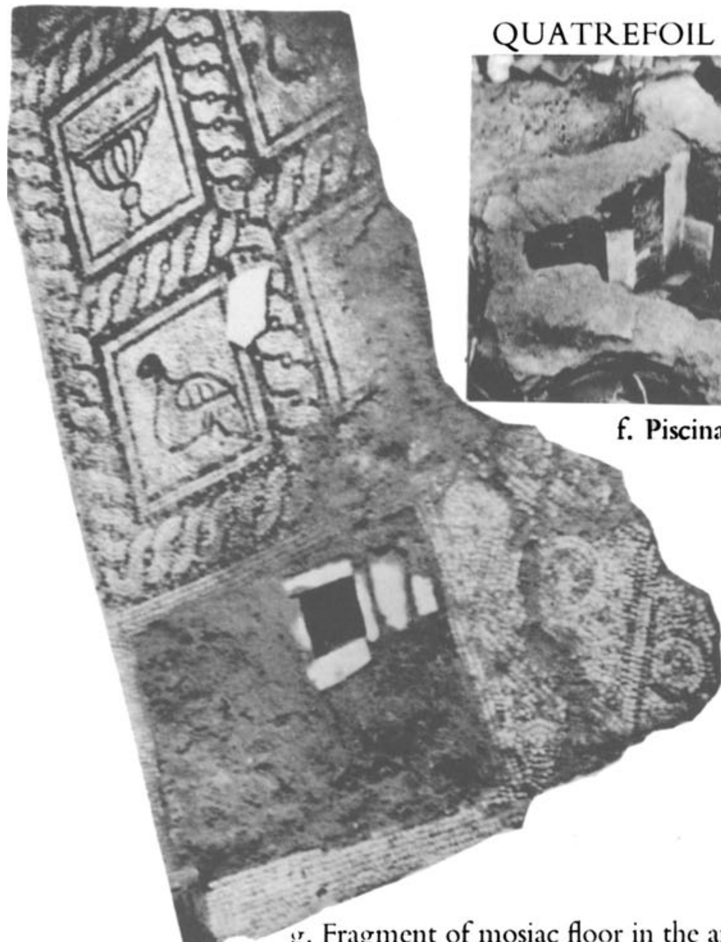




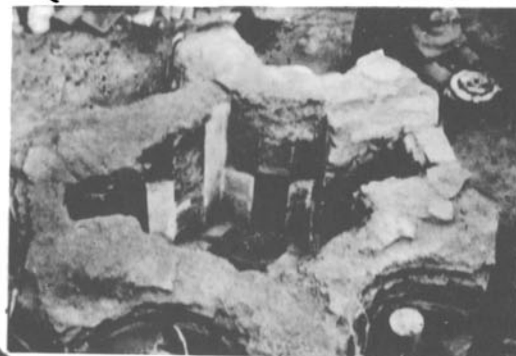


c.—e. Details of pillars from the nave colonnades

QUATREFOIL BAPTISTERY BASILICA, STOBI



g. Fragment of mosiac floor in the ante room to the baptismal chamber



f. Piscina



h. Detail of an earlier mosaic floor in the 'Summer Palace', by the 'Synagogue' Basilica, Stobi



Fig. 87. TETRADRACHM OF SOTIROS HERMAIOS (*circa* 50–30 B.C.) SHOWING ZEUS ENTHRONED. (Twice actual size)

allocutionary inheritance, a common feature of late fourth- and fifth-century representations of Christ in Italy. Examples include the Chapel of S. Aquilino, Milan; Sta Costanza, SS. Cosmas and Damian, and the door of S. Sabina, Rome; probably the Baptistery of Soter, Naples; various sarcophagi of Ravenna, where (as at Arles in France) it is part of the 'Traditio Legis' scene.

The lower parts of the mosaic refer to the conclusion of Ezekiel's vision.

> Afterward he brought me again to the door of the house ; and, behold, waters issued out from under the threshold of the house eastward : for the forefront of the house stood toward the east, and the waters came down from under the right side of the house, at the south side of the altar. . . . Now when I had returned, behold, at the bank of the river were very many trees on the one side and on the other. Then he said unto me, 'These waters issue out toward the east country, and go down into the desert, and go into the sea : which being brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed. And it shall come to pass, that everything that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live : and there shall be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters shall come thither : for they shall be healed ; and everything shall live whither the river cometh. . . . And by the river upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed : it shall bring forth new fruit according to his months, because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary : and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine.' [1]

[1] Ezekiel, xlvii.

Habakkuk ends his prophecy with an epilogue that is indeed appropriate to the spirit of the mosaic:

> Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' feet and he will make me to walk upon mine high places. To the chief singer on my stringed instruments.

Grabar has disputed this normally accepted identity of Habakkuk as one of the two prophets, and has suggested that the one sitting reading his book should be Zechariah. The chronicle of Ignatius, he points out, may well have been altered during rewriting in the course of time, and it is strange that in a monastery dedicated to the Prophet Zechariah such an important mosaic should carry a text of Isaiah and representations of Ezekiel and Habakkuk, but not of Zechariah. Was Ignatius, Grabar asks, or whoever amended him at a later date misled by making out from the book resting on Habakkuk's knees such phrases as 'the life-giving spring' which nourishes 'the souls of believers' and connecting them with Habakkuk's assertion that 'the just shall live by his faith'? [2]

It does indeed seem strange that Zechariah should not be represented — if, in fact, the church was dedicated to him at the time of the erection of the mosaic. But this may not have been the case. The monastery may have possessed another and perhaps larger chapel. Also, a mosaic of Zechariah may have occupied another position of importance in the church. Grabar's objection certainly deserves the fullest attention, yet there is no doubt that in the conditions reigning in the fifth century the message of Habakkuk was particularly pertinent. Perhaps Ignatius' story of the miraculous change in the image may have some significance with regard to the absence of Zechariah which has so far been beyond our ability to fathom.

Recently Grabar, recalling the New Testament spirit of the mosaic, has made the interesting suggestion that, in fact, the two figures may represent Peter and Paul.[3] This would not necessarily conflict with their being Old Testament prophets as well, for there is no reason why the artist should not have conceived as one the theophanies of Ezekiel in exile

[2] A. Grabar, *op. cit.* vol. ii, p. 198 *et seq.*

[3] A. Grabar, 'A propos d'une icone byzantine du XIVe siècle'. *Cahiers Archéologiques*, x (Paris, 1959), p. 297 *et seq.*

and St Paul on the road to Damascus. As Grabar points out, the iconography of the two figures is applicable to Peter and Paul and, except for Peter's seated position (he is not a witness of the vision), their relationship to Christ is in general accord with contemporary renderings of the 'Traditio Legis'. Should this theory be correct, and it is difficult to disagree with it, this mosaic is a document of most profound importance for our understanding of early Christianity.

Two more features of this mosaic remain to be mentioned. The first is the decoration of the face of the arch, which encloses the apse like a border. At its head is a cross within a circular medallion. Pendants, the nature of which is difficult to determine, hang from the cross's horizontal arms and the medallion is supported by two birds, perhaps doves, their wings outstretched. Descending on either side of the arch face are regular patterns of stylised Trees of Life and vessels of the *cantharus* type, between opposed swans. While the swan motif is reminiscent of some of the friezes in the dome of St George, here the birds are portrayed in a much more lively and realistic fashion. Each is treated individually and with evident zest.

The second noteworthy feature is the figure of the river god below the Lion of St Mark on the side of Ezekiel. This god is far removed from the type who, in, for instance, the two Baptisteries of Ravenna, has been 'accepted' into Christianity. This is a barbarian figure, who regards the vision with awe and terror, and symbolises, in terms that were real to Thessalonians of the late fifth century, the inevitable and splendid triumph of Christ and the truth of the text that the just shall live by their faith.

Ignatius, who gave us a delightful but quite fictitious account of the mosaic's origin, comes nearer to historical fact in his description of its rediscovery.

> When the pagan darkness was dispersed and when the Lord ordained that Christian rulers should rule the Roman State, the Church which was built allegedly in the form of a bath, became a monastery dedicated to the prophet Zechariah. At that time a monk called Senoufias from the mountains of Nitria (in Egypt), a holy man who wished and implored the Lord to show Himself as He will appear in the final judgement, heard a voice saying: 'If you wish your desire to be fulfilled, go from your land and from your cell as once did the Patriarch Abraham, and come to the Monastery named Latomos in Thessalonica. There will it be revealed to you.'
>
> The old monk made the necessary preparation for the pilgrimage, took his garment and his stick, and left his cell in the monastery to follow the voice calling to him. After many troubles and anxieties on the way he arrived at last in the famous city of Thessalonica and in the monastery of the Latomos.
>
> Before he could recover from the exertions of the pilgrimage he began to ask the monks and to try to find out whether the monastery existed which the vision had promised him he should find. The old man was sorry deep within his heart and thought that he had been deceived by the devil and had exposed himself to all this trouble in vain when the monks told him that what he was looking for existed neither in their monastery nor in the entire city of Thessalonica. Nevertheless, he continued to hope and only after six months did he decide to return to his monastery feeling that all had been a deceit organised by the devil.
>
> Back in his own familiar cell Senoufias continued to think the same thoughts and complained to the Lord for the unnecessary trouble and the terrible ordeals he had had to undergo. Again the Lord appeared to him as before and told him: 'You were not deceived nor did you make any mistake. Again you have to go to the monastery of the Latomos if you wish to achieve what you desire. The Lord has ordained that you should spend your last days in that monastery.'
>
> With sorrow the old man left his cell again as Adam once left Paradise, and arrived in Thessalonica at the Monastery of the Latomos, where he was given a cell to rest from his tiring journey.
>
> After some time had passed and he had recovered sufficiently to participate in the communal prayers he remained after one of his prayers alone in the Church to perform some penitence. Suddenly a tempest broke out with thunder and lightning and an earthquake began to shake the Church from the very foundations. At this moment the calves' leather fell to the earth together with the bricks and the lime which covered the holy imprint of the Lord on the eastern apse. The face of the Christ appeared like a sun from a cloud so that when the old monk Senoufias saw it, he said: 'Glory be to Thee, Oh Lord, I thank Thee', and delivered his holy soul to the Lord.
>
> The monks on hearing all these happenings rushed to that spot and looking in fear at this sight praised the



VIII CHAPEL OF HOSIOS DAVID, THESSALONICA

DETAIL FROM THE APSE MOSAIC, HABAKKUK

Lord with the Kyrie Eleison. Then after taking the necessary measures for the dead monk they buried him who had been chosen to see the vision and had died.

These miraculous happenings and the cures performed at the burial of the holy remnants of the monk were soon known throughout the entire city and neighbourhood. Many people, flowing like a river, climbed to the monastery and were cured of spiritual and bodily diseases, as happens until the present day. Many even hear in the morning hours in this holy place the choir of the angels praising with their voices the three-fold Divinity.[1]

In its essentials, if not in its details and its dating, Ignatius' story of the concealment and later discovery of the mosaic has the stamp of truth and provides us with the explanation of its remarkable survival. The Theodora episode can be, of course, no more than an attractive legend, partly invented in the course of its oral progress through the centuries and partly compounded from stories of other saints, for instance, St Barbara. But, during the iconoclastic period, when perhaps St Demetrius and 'Acheiropoietos' were stripped of almost all their decoration — although evidently not even the most fiercely iconoclastic emperor dared touch the sacrosanct figure of St Demetrius in his own city — it is highly likely that the monks of the monastery hid their most holy icon beneath a leather-covering and so saved it from destruction. Whether its uncovering in the ninth century was an accidental discovery on the lines described by Ignatius, we do not know. The episode of the Egyptian monk could well have its origin in the close connection which Thessalonian Christianity traditionally had with Egypt and which was probably maintained at least until the Arab conquest of North Africa in the seventh century.

Under the Turkish occupation Hosios David was converted into a mosque and the mosaic was again covered, either by the monks prior to their eviction or by the Turks. It is an idle temptation, but one difficult to resist, to wonder whether centuries to come will give birth to a new folk-tale that will provide an explanation of yet another concealment from the infidel and a miraculous, twentieth-century rediscovery.

[1] Taken from S. Pelekanides *op. cit.* (trans.).

15. THE 'SYNAGOGUE' BASILICA, STOBI (Pl. 37)

This church is so called because one of its pillars carries an undated Greek inscription commemorating certain additions made 'to the synagogue' by Claudius Tiberius Polycharmos, 'father of the community in Stobi'. In fact, the site may well have previously been used for a synagogue, for it would seem that about the end of the fifth or early in the sixth century, an existing building was adapted to Christian purposes.[2]

Standing in the centre of Stobi and adjoining a secular structure known as the Summer Palace, the 'Synagogue' Church is a basilica consisting of a nave and two aisles, a single protruding semicircular apse, a narthex and an atrium. On the south side of the last were three rooms.

The aisles are unusually narrow, and only two columns stand between them and the nave on either side. At the western end of the nave there is evidence of short, internally projecting walls from which arches could have been sprung to the two western pillars. Similar walls, but considerably longer (3·25 metres), also extend inwards from the eastern wall on either side of the apse. Here the projection seems more to have had the purpose of enclosing the sanctuary and, in so doing, to leave two lateral enclosures occupying the eastern ends of each aisle.

The length of the whole 'Synagogue' complex was 43·20 metres, of which the apse projected 3·60 metres. The atrium was 14·40 metres long and the narthex and nave 25·20. The width of the nave and aisles was 15·60 metres.

[2] Kitzinger, 'A Survey of the Early Christian Town of Stobi', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 3 (Harvard, 1946), pp. 129–46. (This includes a full bibliography of pre-1941 publications.)

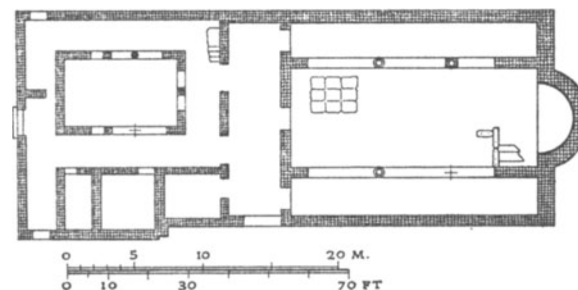


Fig. 88. 'SYNAGOGUE' BASILICA, STOBI. PLAN

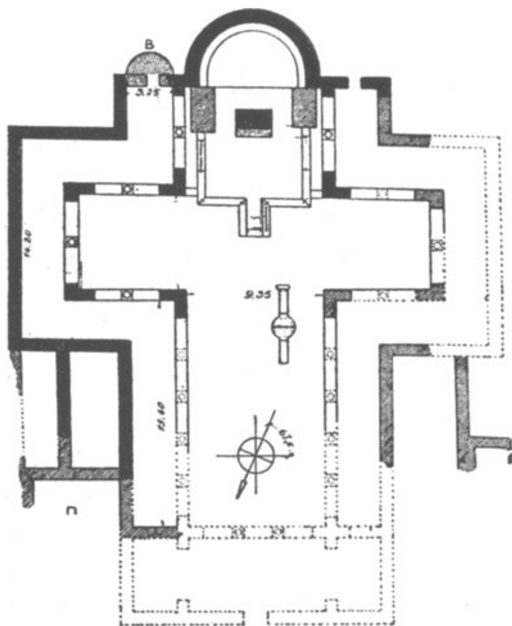


Fig. 89. CRUCIFORM BASILICA, THASOS. PLAN

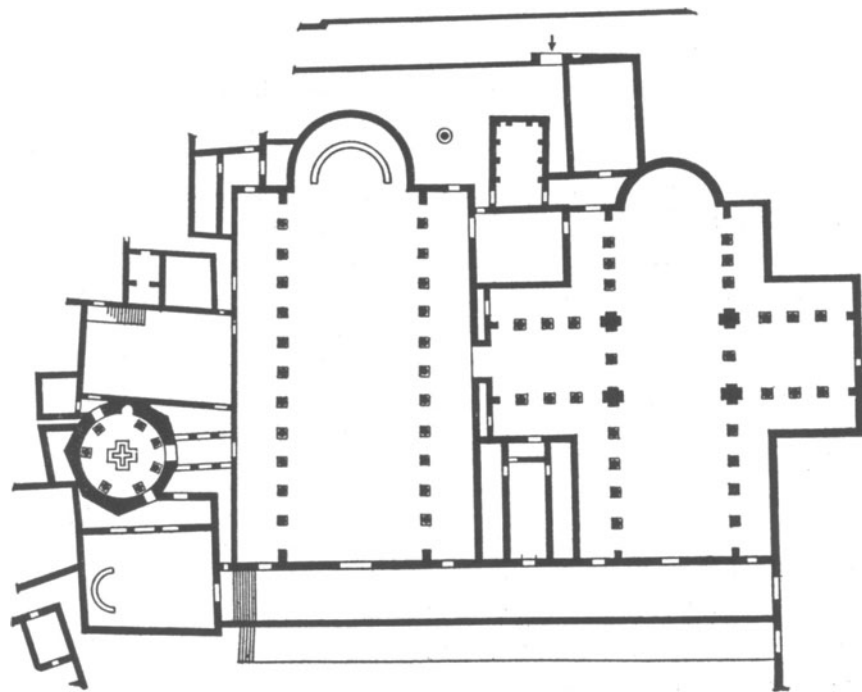


Fig. 90. BASILICA URBANA AND CRUCIFORM 'TWIN' BASILICA, SALONA. PLAN

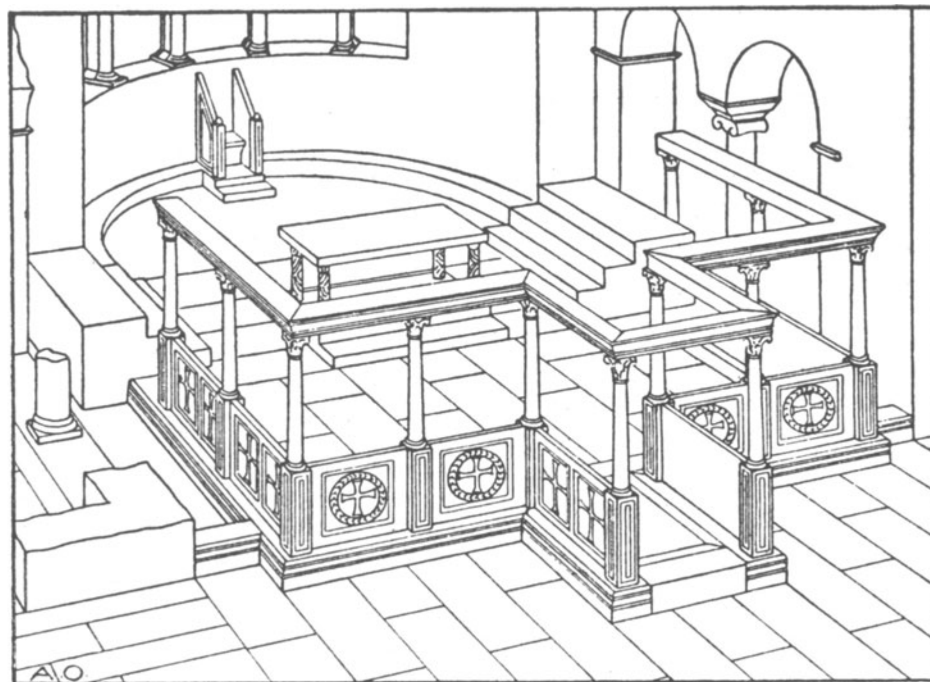


Fig. 91. CRUCIFORM BASILICA, THASOS. THE SANCTUARY
(Reconstruction by Orlandos)

Little remains of the interior decoration of the 'Synagogue' Church, but, in any case, it appears likely that most of the sculptured work was taken from other earlier buildings.

The narrow aisles, the wide intercolumniations and the apparently tripartite form of sanctuary are all Syrian characteristics. However, this may perhaps be due to the church's earlier history as a synagogue rather than to the presence of a strong Syrian community, a Syrian architect or an exceptional receptivity to Syrian influences. The generally accepted dating of the church, that is to say of its conversion into a building for Christian worship, places it after Theodoric's sack of Stobi in 479, and either before or soon after the earthquake of 518.

Nevertheless, we can still only guess at the reason for such a conversion at a period when the city's fortunes were sinking rapidly. Had most other churches been destroyed, either by acts of God or of man? Was there such a strong influx into the city from an insecure and lawless countryside that new churches were required? What had happened to the Jews, whose synagogue it seems once to have been? Had they fled, either because better conditions of life or commerce could be found elsewhere, or because they were regarded as scapegoats for the troubled times and had been subjected to persecution?

16. THE CRUCIFORM BASILICA, THASOS (Pls. 50, 51)

Close to the seashore and within the confines of the ancient capital of Thasos on the island of the same name lie the ruins of a large cruciform basilica, dating from about the beginning of the sixth century.

In contrast to the plan of the T-transept basilicas of St Demetrius and Philippi, an eastern extension of the nave of this church projected beyond the transept. The colonnades dividing the nave from the two aisles followed the lines of the transept walls as in St Demetrius. Unlike the Thessalonian basilica, however, the semicircular apse was not inscribed but protruded beyond the end of the eastern arm, to the east walls of which the colonnades also extended. Stylobates of a chancel screen, separated from the chord of the apse by opposing presbytery benches, extended westwards within the eastern colonnades as far as the piers marking their turns to the north and south. Slightly beyond this point, the stylobates turned inwards towards a central entrance into the bema. A narthex at the western end was connected with the nave by a tribelon. A baptistery probably lay to the north-west of the basilica, for in an adjoining rectangular room facilities appear to have existed for the heating of water.[1] The entire length of the church, including the narthex and apse, was about 44 metres.

Within the bema the remains of a shallow reliquary crypt have been excavated. This was rectangular in shape with steps at the southern end. Presumably the altar table stood above this crypt, but all trace of it has disappeared. An unusual feature of the apse is a low western wall, the remains of which are still visible. Possibly this is an indication that the level of the apse floor was higher than that of the rest of the church. The double mullions of the apse windows are similar to the common Anatolian type. White marble slabs of the type used for flooring can be seen in the neighbourhood — still in use as paving stones, but the only mosaics discovered belong to an earlier Roman house. The columns are of white marble with the exception of two or three green fragments, which perhaps belong to the tribelon. The nave columns appear to have been surmounted by simple and very low impost capitals.

Orlandos, who studied the site in 1938, before the results of earlier archaeological activity had suffered irreparable harm at the hands of enemy-occupying troops during the Second World War, has pointed out that its ground plan is almost identical with that of the Cruciform Basilica at Salona. Furthermore, an attempted reconstruction of either church is applicable equally to the other (Fig. 92).[2]

Discussing the Salonitan basilica, which was attached to the Episcopal Church of the city, and which replaced an earlier, simple, three-naved building, Dyggve writes:

> The Greek cross has been used as motif for the ground plan in cult-buildings since the time of Constantine. It is not so extraordinary that the architectural

[1] X. I. Macaronas, Archaeological Reports, ΜΑΚΕΔΟΝΙΚΑ, 1941–1952; vol. 2, p. 659 *et seq.* (Greek).

[2] A. K. Orlandos, Η ΞΥΛΟΣΤΕΓΟΣ ΠΑΛΑΙΟΧΡΙΣΤΙΑΝΙΚΗ ΒΑΣΙΛΙΚΗ (Athens, 1952 and 1954).

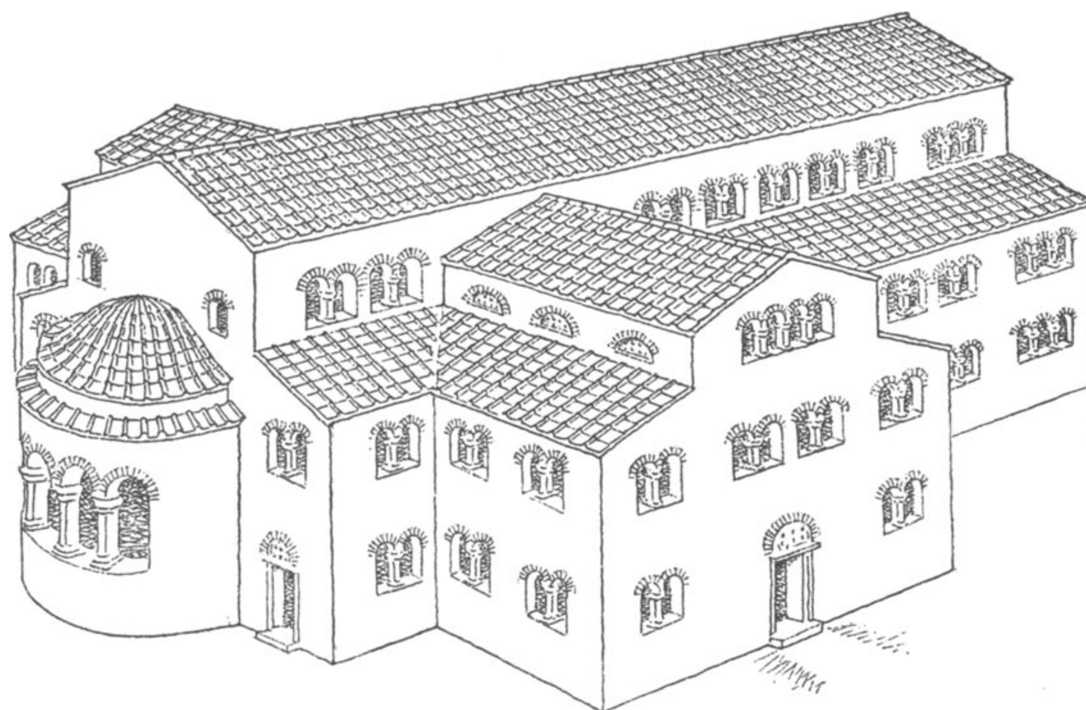


Fig. 92. CRUCIFORM BASILICA, THASOS. Exterior view from the north-east (Reconstruction after Orlandos)

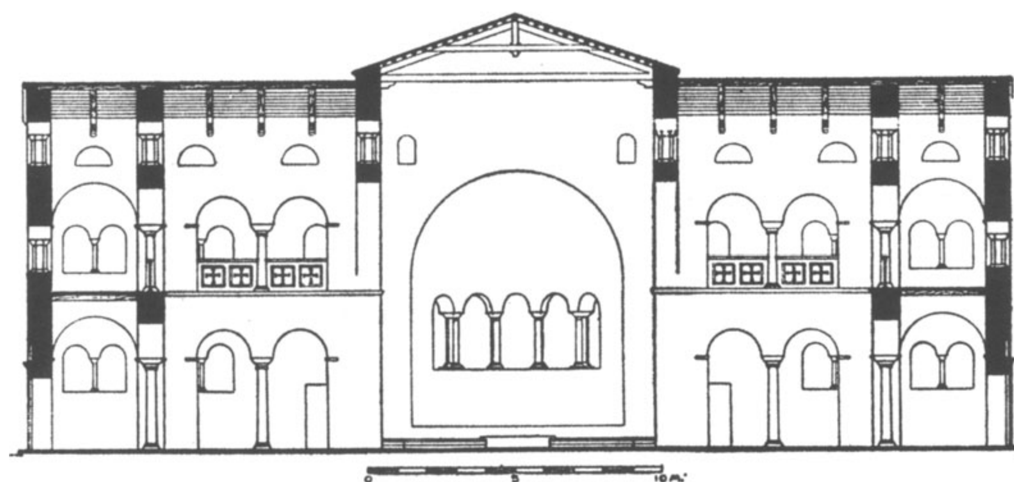


Fig. 93. CRUCIFORM BASILICA, THASOS. TRANSVERSE SECTION ACROSS THE TRANSEPT (Reconstruction by Orlandos)

golden age during the time of Justinian also took up the solution of the cruciform church at such a great scale as in this church. In the years 530 and 533 a church council was held at Salona under the presidency of Bishop Honorius. It would be easy to understand from a purely human point of view if the council had been summoned by Honorius, who in the records from the council is styled *archiepiscopus* — just at the time when this large architecturally so remarkable church was finished.[1]

That Salona, the leading city of the east Adriatic coast and still enjoying prosperity as well as the re-

[1] E. Dyggve, *History of Salonitan Christianity* (Oslo, 1951), p. 29.

flected glory of its martyrs in the early sixth century, should have erected such a martyrium is hardly surprising. Thasos, however, had long ceased to be the island state with colonies that included rich areas of the Macedonian and Thracian mainland. Clearly it was still wealthy. Yet the building of this church on such a splendid scale may not have been entirely due to local prosperity and a desire to build a church that would be at least the equal of those constructed in other important centres. On the heights of the acropolis above the city there still stood the temple of Apollo, though doubtless to some extent despoiled and its great statue (now in the town museum) thrown down. Close by, there was still the sanctuary of Pan. Who the saint was whose relics were interred in the reliquary crypt beneath the altar we do not know, but it is likely that even in the sixth century he and his priests were facing no light challenge from the island's ancient gods. The Christians of Thasos were probably fully aware that the forces of paganism were still far from vanquished.

Probably in the second half of the sixth century a small apse was added to the north aisle of the basilica's east wing. This would have been connected with the addition of a prothesis chamber to the sanctuary.

17. THE BASILICA AT VOSKOHORIA, NEAR KOZANI

In the village of Voskohoria, close to Kozani on the Verria road, an early Byzantine basilica was accidentally discovered by local workmen laying a water-pipe in 1935. This basilica has a special interest in being the only one yet to have been discovered in south-western Macedonia. The area was populous in Hellenistic and Roman times, and its popularity seems to have continued into the early Byzantine period, until the barbarian invasions transformed it into a region of desolation far outside the pale of Byzantine law and order.

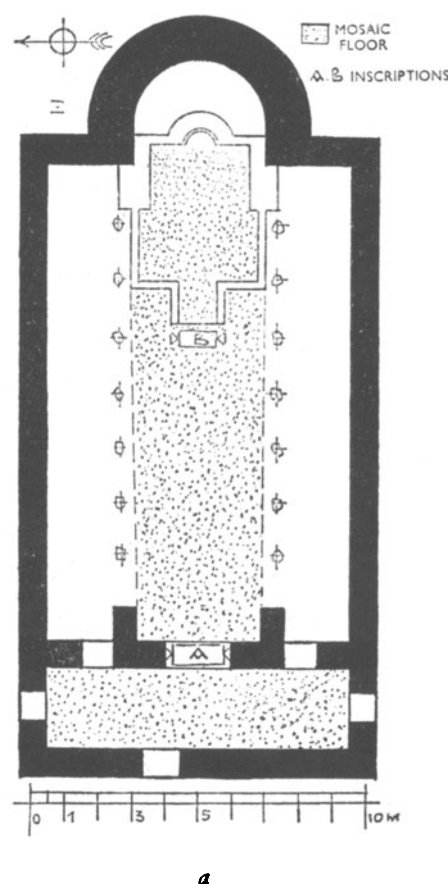
Xyngopoulos, who carried out the subsequent excavations,[1] reports that in its main structural parts it followed the simplest form of basilica, having a nave and two aisles, a narthex and a projecting semicircular apse. Its length, exclusive of the apse, was 19·50 metres and its width 10·60. Colonnades, each of seven columns, only the bases of which have remained, separated the nave from the aisles. Three entrances led from the narthex into the nave and aisles; but the three giving access to the narthex from the outside were not placed to correspond with them. Two were situated at the north and the south ends and the sole western entrance lay slightly to the north of the axis of the church, an arrangement which may have had the object of excluding draughts, or was perhaps intended to prevent those entering from viewing the sanctuary until they were inside the church.

The sanctuary presents a number of unusual features. The chancel screen, which extended into the nave as far as the second column from the east wall before turning inwards, was not composed of the usual marble slabs supported by mullions or piers, but consisted of brick walls rising, considers Xyngopoulos, to a height of one metre. These were given a hard and shiny surface upon which circles and crosses were roughly carved in order to give an impression of the conventional marble slabs. Between the apse and the columns nearest to it, the walls were considerably thicker than elsewhere.

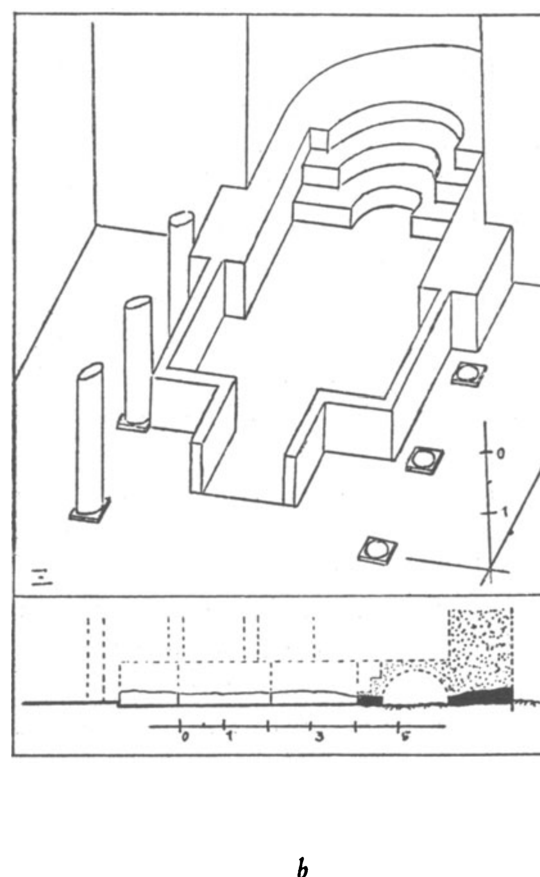
Xyngopoulos also discovered evidence of a wall, with a niche in its centre, extending along the chord of the apse with no opening permitting access to the space behind. From this and other evidence in the apse, and also from analogous constructions in other churches, particularly those of Nea Anchialos in Thessaly, he has reconstructed three steps, each with concentric indentations, rising within the apse to a height of one metre, that is to say to the same level as the chancel walls (Fig. 94*b*). The presbytery seats, he suggests, were either placed against the apse wall on the stepped platform, or on the thickened parts of the chancel walls.

No evidence of an altar in the bema has been found and, as the floor of the bema is covered with mosaics which show no sign of having been disturbed by the sinking of stone supports, it is probable that the altar was a wooden structure, as appears also to have been the case in the basilica of Daphnousi.

[1] A. Xyngopoulos, 'The Early Christian Basilica of Voskohoria', ΜΑΚΕΔΟΝΙΚΑ, 1940, vol. i, pp. 8-23 (Greek).



a



b

Fig. 94. BASILICA AT VOSKOHORIA. *a.* Plan. *b.* The sanctuary. (Reconstruction by Xyngopoulos)

While no sculptured remains have been found in this basilica, considerable areas of floor mosaic have been preserved, extending over the floors of the bema, the nave and the narthex. Unfortunately, the falling of burning beams when the church was destroyed has obliterated the colours, and, consequently, the designs in the narthex and the western part of the nave.

Xyngopoulos describes the almost intact floor of the bema as containing two rectangular panels, in each of which are two birds standing back to back. These centre-pieces are surrounded by smaller squares enclosing circles and rhomboid shapes. The chancel entrance zone is decorated with a 'fish scale' design. The two square spaces between the protruding chancel entrance and the colonnades display chequered squares. In the nave the main decoration to have survived the burning of the church consists of three large square sections. That nearest the bema has a bird, probably a phoenix, enclosed within a circular border in the centre of a geometric pattern. The second square is sub-divided into four smaller squares by double spiral borders which hold alternately flower-like forms and partridges. The design of the third square is unfortunately impossible to distinguish.

It is pointed out that these mosaic patterns appear to follow no particular plan, but are simply intended — in a most un-Byzantine manner — to fill empty spaces. Nevertheless, their execution is good. The geometrical designs are firmly planned and the birds are posed in a natural manner. They give the impression, however, of being good copies rather than original creations, and there is a strong likelihood that the mosaics of the Rotunda of St George in Thessalonica, particularly those in the ceilings of the bays, provided the model.

Voskohoria, in fact, has all the characteristics of a provincial church modelled upon those of greater centres not so very far away, Nea Anchialos perhaps providing the architectural inspiration and Thessalonica the artistic motifs. Xyngopoulos argues convincingly that it is essentially a provincial and poorer version of greater and wealthier monuments, and not a later and degenerate form. He consequently puts

the date of its construction to about the beginning of the sixth century.

18. THE BASILICA AT PALIKURA, NEAR STOBI (Pl. 52)

At Palikura, three kilometres to the west of Stobi, a basilica consisting of a nave, two aisles and a semi-circular protruding apse has been excavated. The aisles, which are slightly under 18 metres long, are divided from the nave by colonnades, each of five columns. Walls, 2 metres long, project from the east and west walls to terminate the colonnades.[1] The plan shows three western entrances into the church; it gives no indication of a narthex, but it would be strange if one had not existed.

East of the church there appears to have been a courtyard and, beyond this, an octagonal baptistery inscribed within a square. There were also numerous other annexes which Egger suggests may be evidence of a monastic site.[2]

The sculptural remains found in the church seem to originate from two distinctly different periods. Some are obviously contemporary with Bishop Philip's Church at Stobi. In fact they are so similar to fragments belonging to this church that they may even have come from there. The later period, to which most of the sculptured remains appear to belong, can be dated with reasonable certainty to the middle of the sixth century. The shafts of columns, a chancel slab and capitals are, as Nikolajević-Stojković points out, completely different from anything yet found in Stobi.[3] Some of the columns have areas of fluted decoration, others show incised, curved lines, another type is squared at the top with a cross carved on each face. Of two chancel or parapet slabs discovered, one displays a plain, cleanly carved cross in a rectangular border, the other a cross inscribed within a circle, with amorphous leafy shapes filling the spaces between the four arms and heavy ivy tendrils terminating in single leaves on either side of the circle (Pl. 52).

A baptistery was unusual in a comparatively small church, particularly one so close to a city with an episcopal church. The rite of baptism was the prerogative of a bishop. Can we therefore conclude that this rural basilica actually attained the status of an episcopal church?

This seems unlikely while a bishop remained in Stobi, and we know that, in name at least, Stobi definitely continued to be an episcopal see until the

[1] E. Kitzinger, 'A Survey of the Early Christian Town of Stobi', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, No. 3 (Harvard, 1946). (This lists publications concerning Palikura prior to 1940.)

[2] R. Egger, 'Die städtische Kirche von Stobi', *Jahreshefte des Österreichischen Archäologischen Instituts*, 1929, p. 42.

[3] I. Nikolajević-Stojković, *Early Byzantine Decorative Architectural Sculpture in Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro*, pp. 47, 90 (Belgrade, 1957) (Serbian with French summary).

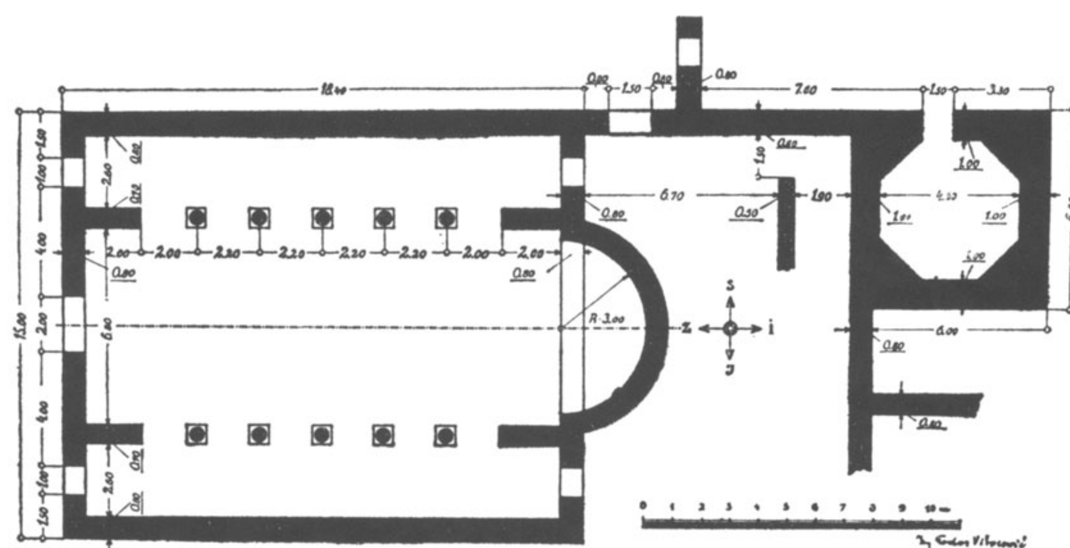


Fig. 95. BASILICA AT PALIKURA, NEAR STOBI. PLAN

end of the seventh century. However, we have no information concerning the amount of damage caused in Stobi by the earthquake of 518, which apparently destroyed Scupi, not very far away to the north. Should this damage have been severe and have reduced the great Basilica of Bishop Philip and other important churches to ruins, it would then be understandable that the Bishop of Stobi would have moved to an undamaged church nearby until Stobi had been rebuilt or lack of security obliged him to return. If this was already a monastery, offices and accommodation would be to hand. If not, perhaps they were built at this time. Such a move would be even more likely if the monastery had been founded by Bishop Philip in connection with his Episcopal Church in Stobi, as the close correspondence between the fifth-century sculptured fragments may imply. On the other hand, without very careful examination of the sculptures in question, the possibility must not be excluded that these were brought from Stobi to the Palikura church for re-use.

The later sculptures are also difficult to explain with any degree of certainty. Most probably they belong to the brief era of relative peace and security established by Justinian. Possibly they were part of a rebuilding of the church at this time — after it had been sacked once by the Avars and Slavs, or other raiders, and before they quickly and finally destroyed it.



JUSTINIAN THE GREAT. (From the mosaic in S. Vitale, Ravenna)

Chapter X

The Monuments — II: Justinian to the Slav Settlement

(527 to Seventh Century)

OMNIA quae cernis magno constructa labore
moenia, templa, domus, fontes, stabula, atria, thermas
auxilio Crristi [sic] paucis construxit in annis
antistes Stefanus sub principe Iustiniano.

All you see around, built with great labour, ramparts, temples, houses, fountains, stables, atria, baths, with the help of Christ has been erected in a few years by the president Stephanus under Emperor Justinian.

(An inscription found at Izbičan near Priboj in Yugoslavia.) [1]

[1] N. Vulić, *Spomenik*, xvciii, 1941-48 (Belgrade), p. 159.

The Gothic wars, the Hun and other invasions had so undermined the economy and reduced the population of the once rich and densely inhabited central Balkan provinces that little construction work of importance beyond the repair of fortifications took place during the seven or eight decades prior to the reign of Justinian (527–65). Under this emperor the fortifications programme was accelerated to meet the new Slav and Avar threat. Procopius tells us that in Thrace, Macedonia, Dardania, Epirus and Greece some six hundred fortified positions were either newly built or, in most cases, strengthened. Regions of particular strategic importance were even provided, where necessary, with new populations and, to meet their requirements, entirely new settlements and even new cities were built with, in the words of Stephanus's inscription, 'ramparts, temples, houses, fountains, stables, atria, baths'.

Dardania, including Scupi and Ulpiana, and western Dacia Mediterranea were treated particularly lavishly. For one reason, it was the region of the emperor's birthplace, a simple village which he transformed into a splendid city with the name of Justiniana Prima. Although definite confirmation is still lacking, it is likely that Justiniana Prima and the archaeological site of Caričin Grad (or Tsarichin Grad to give it an English phonetic spelling) are the same. Certainly the excavations of Caričin Grad have proved the Stephanus inscription to have been no exaggeration.

Apart from possible considerations of sentiment, Justinian had other reasons for this generous building programme. Firstly, the mountains around Caričin Grad were a valuable source of ores. Secondly, with the breaching of the frontier defences along the Danube and Save rivers by great numbers of Slavs, Avars and other land and plunder hungry peoples, it had become a key region in the new defence in depth among the Balkan mountain ranges, a defence system which Deroko and Radojčić describe as 'by the extent and variety of its construction among the greatest works of its kind in world history'.[1]

Caričin Grad and the impressive numbers of religious, civil and military buildings of which evidence is being discovered in its neighbourhood all owed their existence to the new circumstances of the sixth century. Wars and invasions had not been the only disasters to have befallen the Balkans. Earthquakes, and doubtless pestilence, had added their toll. A severe earthquake in 518 had reduced Scupi to ruins, and at the same time Stobi and other cities must have suffered considerable damage. But now the Balkans faced the prospect of barbarian invasion and chaos beside which the Gothic depredations must have appeared minor disturbances. The Vardar valley, and such cities as Stobi and Scupi, lost not only their military and commercial *raison d'être* but also their security, for Balkan defences were now centred upon and directed from Constantinople, not Thessalonica, and the Vardar had consequently been transformed from an imperial artery into a natural route for invaders.

Dangerous as it is to draw conclusions from incomplete evidence, our present knowledge of buildings erected in the sixth and seventh centuries testifies impressively to the paramountcy of military considerations and the high rating accorded to the Christian religion as an imperial asset. Churches were built profusely in the militarily strategic areas. Elsewhere even major restorations seem to have been an exception. The morale of the citizens in the face of constant danger is the only rational explanation of the rebuilding of St Demetrius in the seventh century. The replacement of Basilica A at Philippi by a new episcopal church towards the middle of the sixth century is the only example of which we know where a new Justinian church in Macedonia probably possessed a civil, to be precise, a pilgrimage, significance, rather than one that was primarily military. It may, therefore, be useful to discuss it first and then to take a group of country churches in the north, where new influences make their appearance from other parts of the Byzantine Empire.

19. THE BASILICA B, PHILIPPI (Pls. 53–55)

The site chosen by the Philippians for a replacement of Basilica A lay to the south of the Via Egnatia and, unlike the earlier church, was a distance of several

[1] A. Deroko and S. Radojčić, 'Byzantine Archaeological Remains in the Region of Jablanica and Pusta Reka', *Starinar*, 1950, pp. 175–81 (Belgrade) (Serbian).

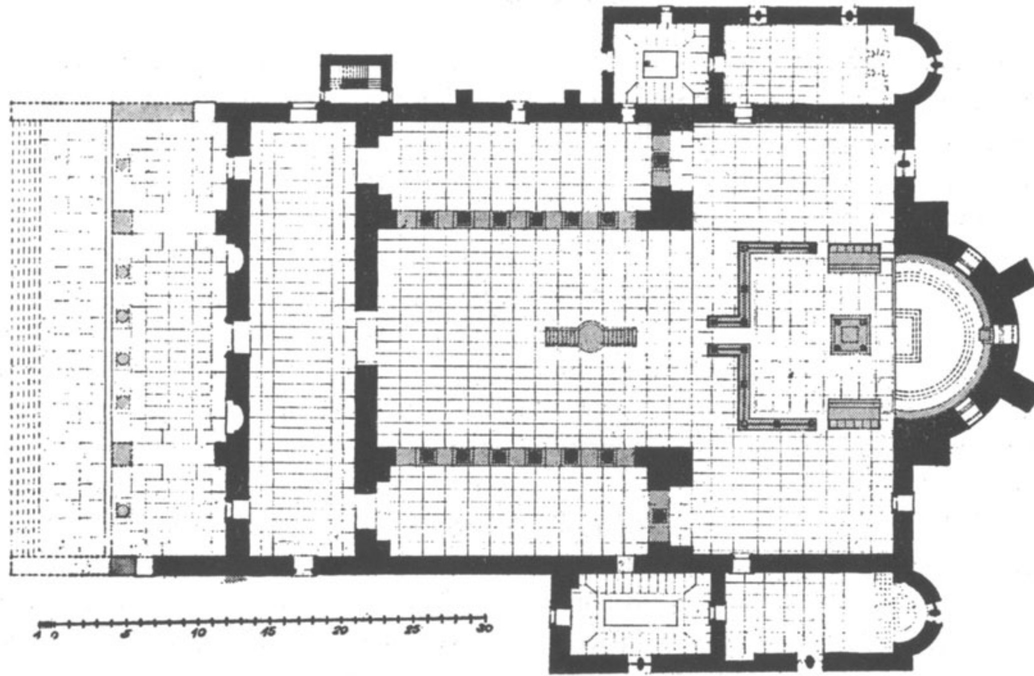


Fig. 97. BASILICA B, PHILIPPI. PLAN

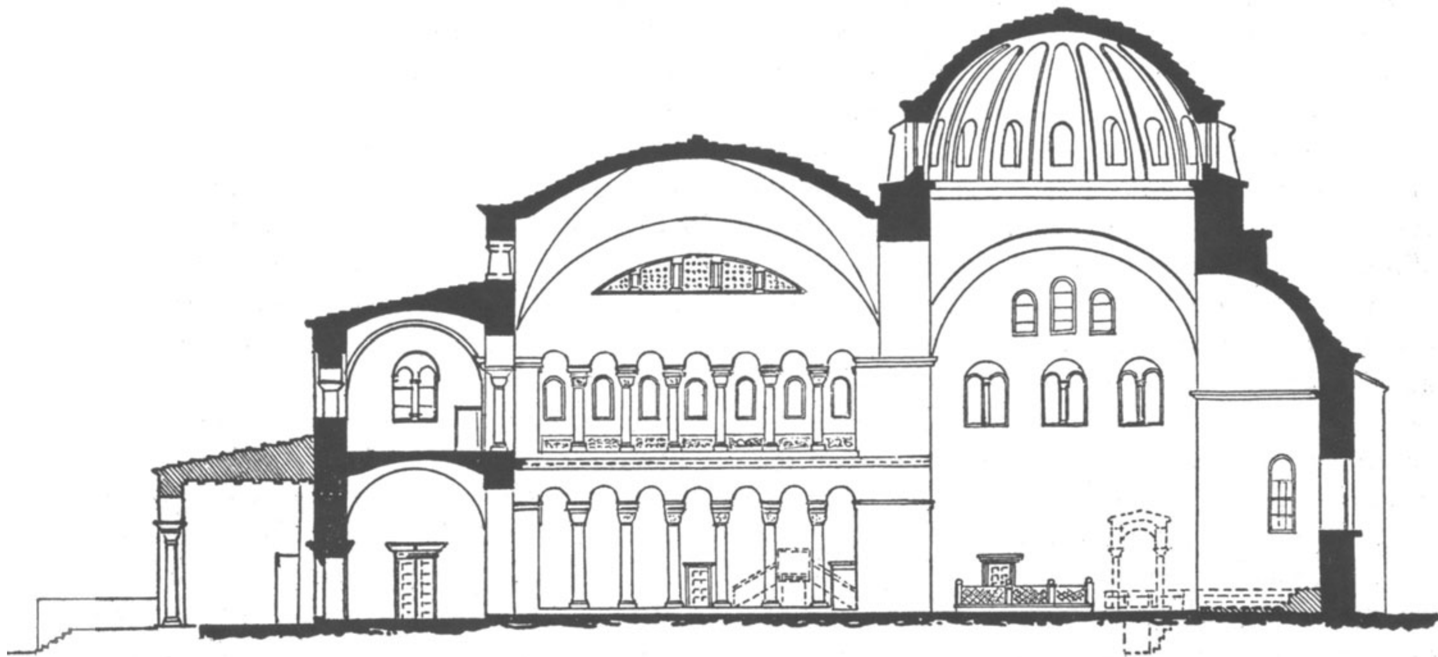


Fig. 98. BASILICA B, PHILIPPI. SECTION. (Reconstruction after Lemerle)

hundred metres from the Acropolis. A group of Roman buildings was levelled in order to construct a domed basilica with eastern annexes that, of comparable size (56 metres in length including the narthex and the apse), was more complex and no less splendidly and excitingly conceived than its predecessor.[1] Nevertheless, it was even more ill-fated. Before the sanctuary and atrium had been completed, the great dome

[1] P. Lemerle, *Philippes et la Macédoine Orientale* (Paris, 1945), pp. 415-513.

that had been raised above the former collapsed. Thereupon work ceased, and the church remained in its shattered and unfinished state. Probably all available financial resources were exhausted, and the circumstances of increasing insecurity and economic disruption were not conducive to the investment of huge sums upon the building and repair of elaborate pilgrim churches.

Basilica B was built of stone and brick; stone for such principal structural members as the piers, brick and stone in alternating series of rubble filled courses for the walls, and brick for the vaults.

Three entrances led from the eastern portico of the atrium into the narthex, nearly 31 metres across and 7·50 deep. Its north and south walls also contained doorways. A second, symmetrically placed set of three arched entrances opened from the narthex into the nave and the two aisles. The central opening, which was slightly larger than the others, did not have a tribelon. Both nave and aisles were short, less than 19 metres, and relatively wide, 15·40 and 6·40 metres respectively. As Lemerle points out, if the width of the low, single stylobate dividing nave and aisle is added to that of the latter, the proportion is just 2:1. The nave and aisles terminated at two massive piers, and here the colonnades turned outwards to meet the north and south walls and to enclose the aisles. The ambo stood in the middle of the nave at its eastern end.

East of the two piers, which with two others standing at each side of the apse carried the church's great, single, eastern dome, was a large rectangular space, 14 metres deep, 31 across and bounded by the northern, eastern and southern walls of the main body of the structure. In the centre of this space, directly underneath the dome, was the bema, its altar, covered by a ciborium, standing between two opposed presbytery benches. A low chancel screen extended westwards from these benches, but turned inwards to form a central entrance while still beneath the dome. A slightly horseshoe-shaped apse, with three windows and with two substantial buttresses besides the two eastern piers at its base, protruded beyond the east wall.

Two narrow rooms, with small eastern apses that jutted beyond the east wall on either side of the main apse, were annexed in symmetrical fashion to the north and south walls of the rectangular space containing the bema. They were connected to this part of the church by doorways at the western ends of the intervening walls. West of and lying flush with these two rooms were two others, that on the southern side being somewhat longer than the northern room. The latter was the baptistery, and contained a rectangular baptismal basin in its centre. Both rooms had doorways leading to those with apses, to the aisles and to the outside. Unlike the rest of the structure all four of these annexed rooms lacked a second storey and, from the structural viewpoint, therefore, cannot be regarded as forming a true transept.

The nave, Lemerle considers, was probably vaulted with clerestory lighting, and vaulting was also used for the aisles and narthex and for the galleries which ran above them. The dome, resting upon pendentives, was lit by windows inserted along its base.

Like Basilica A, the internal decoration of Basilica B was of a particularly high artistic standard that probably reflected the influence of Constantinople rather than Thessalonica. In Lemerle's words, the decoration is, 'in effect, that of Aghia Sophia, carried into the heart of Macedonia by an artist himself from Constantinople', and 'the clearest evidence we possess of the expansion into the provinces of the decorative style created in Aghia Sophia, and, on the other hand, of the close dependence on the capital by Macedonia at that time'.[1] (It should be noted, of course, that Lemerle was speaking specifically of eastern Macedonia.)

Coloured marble was featured more freely than in Basilica A. Green Thessalian marble was used for the columns of the nave and in the bema; white marble in the galleries. The capitals of the nave were of exceptional beauty, and as modern in relation to those of Basilica A as was the church itself. Their main decoration, appearing on each of the four faces, consisted of two large, thorny acanthus leaves, carved in sharp relief to utilise with maximum effect the contrast of light and shade. Sculptured in local marble, they nevertheless closely followed the designs of capitals in Aghia Sophia in Constantinople. Their imposts, carrying an ornamental band of reliefs of

[1] P. Lemerle, *op. cit.* p. 513.

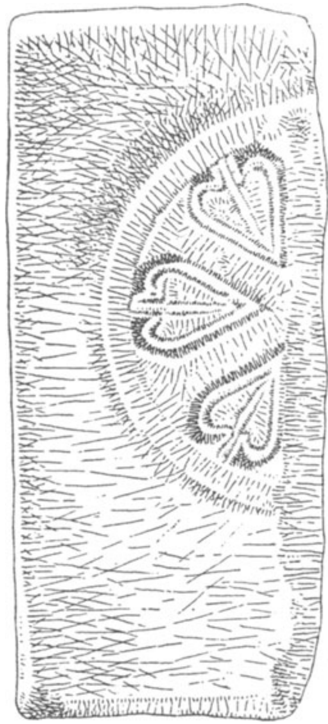


Fig. 99. BASILICA B, PHILIPPI. Fragment of altar or ceremonial table found in the southern apsed room

stylised, joined fishes, recall the crossed fish motif which is a characteristic of the mid-fifth-century church of Alahan Kilisse (Koja Kilisse) in Cilicia. The same motif is also to be seen in an ornamental band on the remains of the north-west pier and a short piece has similarly survived on the east interior wall of the narthex.

A fragment of a slab, apparently belonging either to an altar or to a prothesis table, has been found with a carving of an encircled six-armed cross formed from six stylised ivy leaves. This motif, flanked by two four-armed crosses over single ivy leaves, is to be seen again on part of a chancel slab, where its execution closely resembles that on the chancel slab of the 'Extra Muros' Basilica (Pl. 10*b*). The inside face of this fragment displays a circle or medallion enclosing a normal four-armed cross. A number of small pieces have survived from other types of slabs, some clearly belonging to the ambo, others to the parapets of the galleries and, possibly, to the chancel screen. Most of these are fragments of the type of slab either displaying a diamond shape inscribed within a rectangle, the central and corner spaces being filled with various symbols of Christian significance, or characterised by a series of small diamond outlines, each containing a bird or a foliate design (Fig. 100).

The transitional and experimental nature of Basilica B is reflected in the arrangement of the sanctuary which not only comprised the whole of the large rectangular space at the eastern end of the church and the apse extending east of the bema, but also the two apsed north and south annexes, which, it seems, were constructed to serve the functions of prothesis and diaconicon. The absence of a tribelon, and the position of the ambo, exactly in line with the entrance from the narthex into the nave and the entrance through the chancel screen into the bema, imply a fundamental change from the liturgical plan followed in Basilica A. There, provision was made for ceremonial processions to pass from the narthex, through the tribelon, along the centre of the nave into the bema. The plan of Basilica B ruled out the practicability of such a procession, in spite of the fact that the sixth century, its date of construction, was a period of greatly increasing ceremonialisation.

Here, perhaps, we have the explanation of the spaces between the bema and the prothesis and diaconicon annexes. Although receptive to Syrian influences, Philippi had remained essentially a Greco-Roman city. Syrian influence had resulted in the introduction of a simple form of tripartite sanctuary in Basilica A; the later church, as one would expect from its position and importance as a pilgrimage centre, made appropriate provision for such officially recognised liturgical changes — all of them in the direction of the consolidation of this Syrian influence — as had occurred in the interval. Nevertheless, the Greco-Roman nature of Philippi, while conceding the necessity for chambers of prothesis and diaconicon, retained its native form of bema, one, in fact, almost identical to that of Basilica A. Not only did this leave the altar in full view of the congregation in the nave, it provided, as had Basilica A, open spaces accessible alike to the bema and the nave for the deacons to perform their offices. The plan of the sanctuary of Basilica B was a stage in the transformation of the Greek church from its original basilical form into the domed, 'cross-in-square' building. It was an important stage, moreover, for despite the disaster in which this Greco-Syrian compromise ended, it was



Fig. 100. BASILICA B, PHILIPPI. Fragments of sculptured slabs

repeated, although without the complication of a dome, in the seventh-century reconstruction of the Basilica of St Demetrius in Thessalonica, as can be seen from a comparison of the plan of the sanctuary with that shown in Figure 66.

The style of Basilica B's decoration and architecture indicates a date of construction slightly earlier than that of Aghia Sophia in Constantinople, dedicated in 563. This is supported by the liturgical arrangements, and a date towards the end of the first half of the sixth century is likely to be correct.

The subsequent history of Basilica B is shrouded in

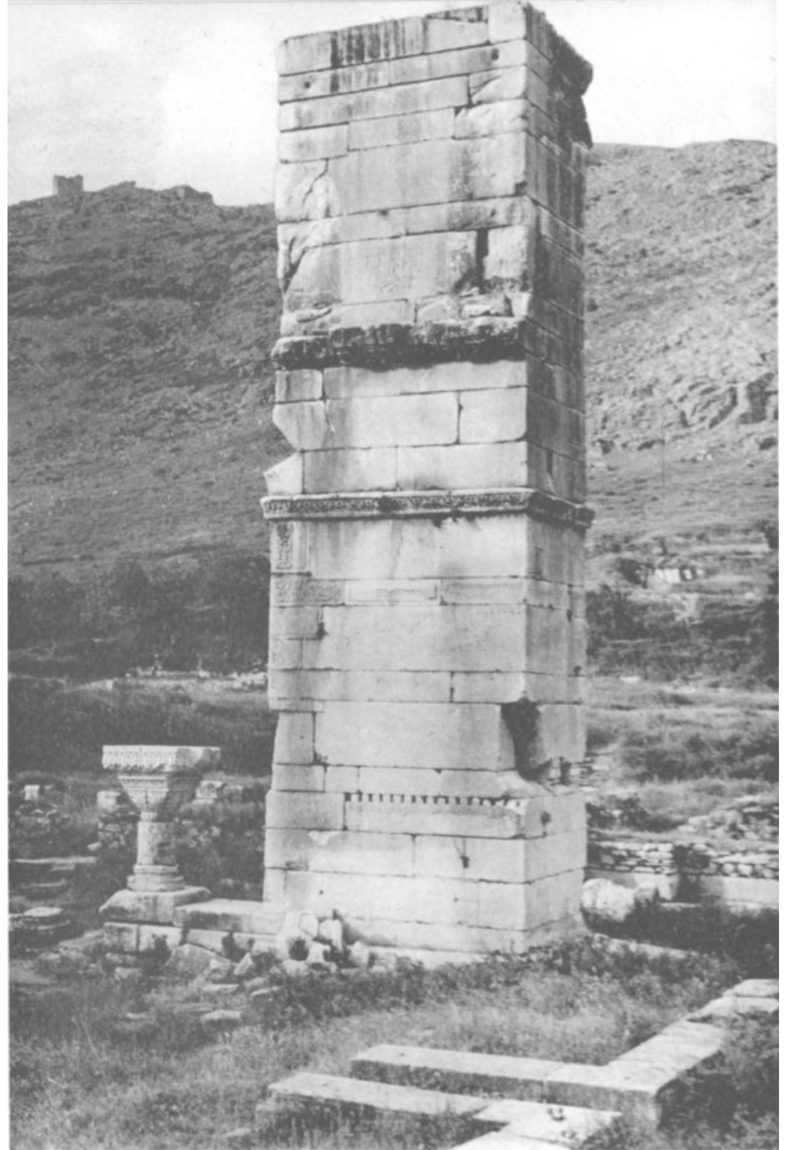
a. View from the north west

b. View from the south west

53 BASILICA B. PHILIPPI



b. Doorway between the southern lateral chambers



c. Stylobates of the chancel entrance, the north eastern pier and, to the left, a nave capital. Behind is the acropolis

a. Pilaster and course-

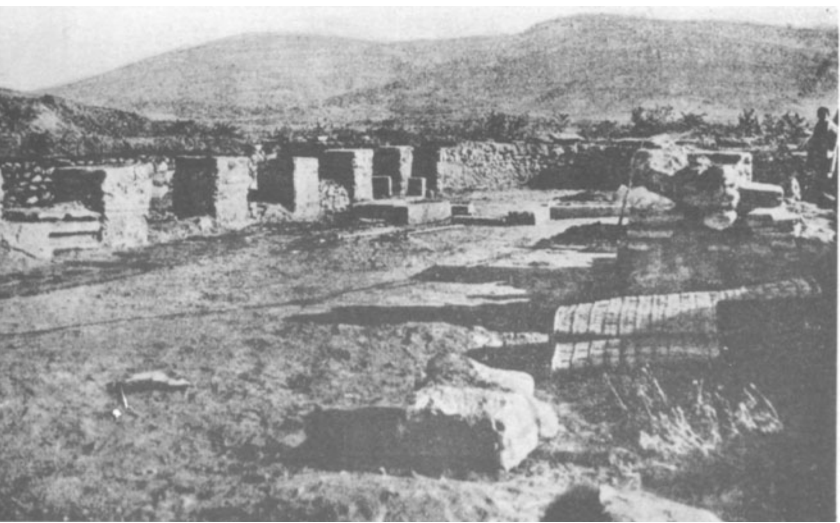




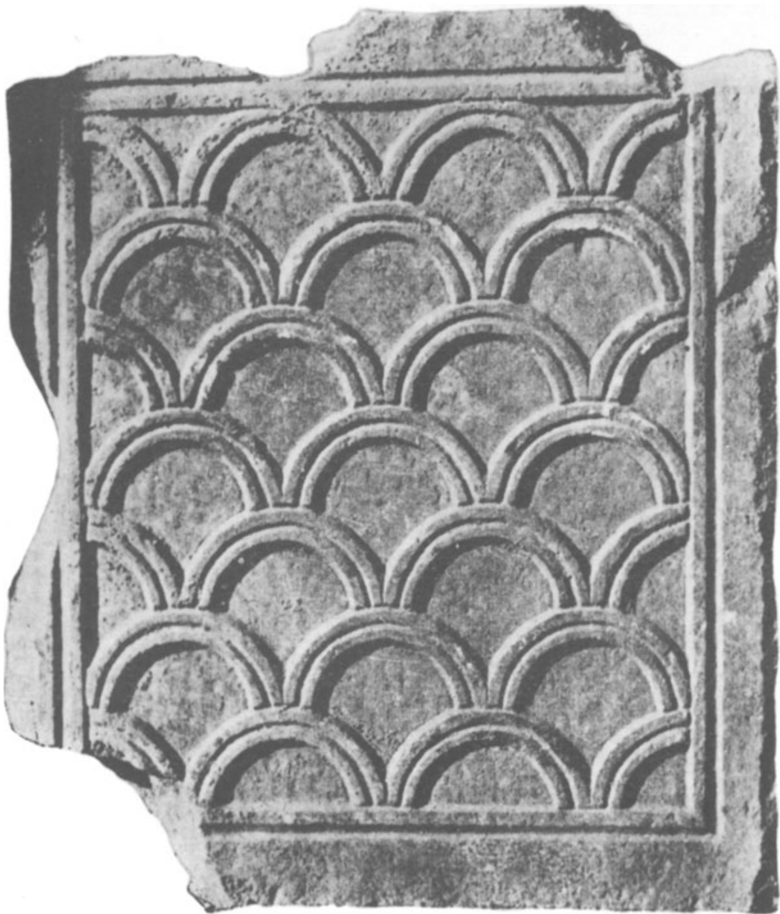
Nave capital and impost, fragment of a pillar and base

55 BASILICA B, PHILIPPI

56 BASILICA AT SUVODOL



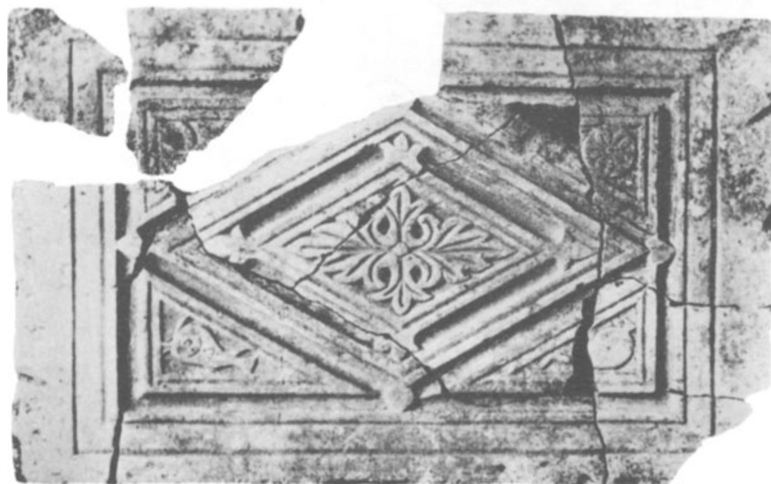
a. View of the nave and apse from the narthex



d. Fragment of slab



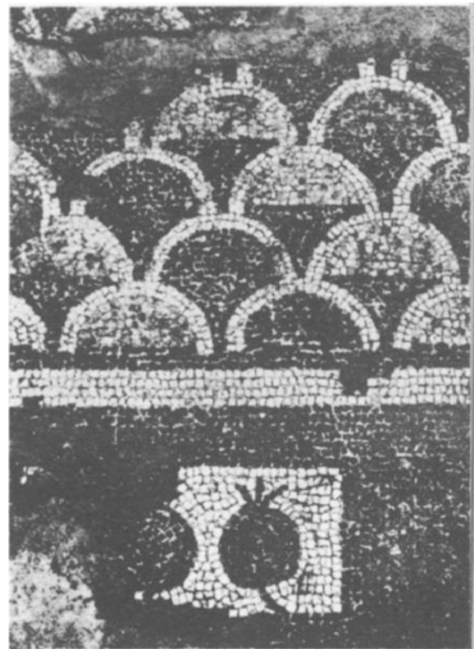
e. Fragment of slab



f. Fragment of slab



b. Remnant of the mosaic floor of the bema



c. Remnant of the mosaic floor of the bema

the same dismal oblivion that overtook the rest of Philippi. For two or three centuries and possibly longer it seems to have remained an unconsecrated ruin, for most of the period lying in the middle of a sacked and desolate city. Later, perhaps around the tenth or eleventh centuries, the apsed annexes and the narthex appear to have been adapted for use as small chapels. The church's sole inscription, found in the nave and dated to 837, was carved by a Bulgar hand. In a cryptically ominous manner its concluding words supply a grim postscript — almost, one might say, an epitaph — to the Early Byzantine history of the once proud city of apostolic fame. It reads: 'If one seeks the truth, the god sees it, and if one deceives, the god sees it. The Bulgars have done much good to the Christians, and the Christians have forgotten it; but the god sees it.'



Fig. 101. MAP OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD OF CARIČIN GRAD

20. COUNTRY CHURCHES IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD OF CARIČIN GRAD

Many years must pass before a sufficient number of the churches built around Caričin Grad in the sixth century have been excavated and analysed to enable a definitive account of them to be given. Nevertheless, the various ruined churches so far discovered have each a particular historic value in the sense that they were local buildings, built by and designed for local congregations.

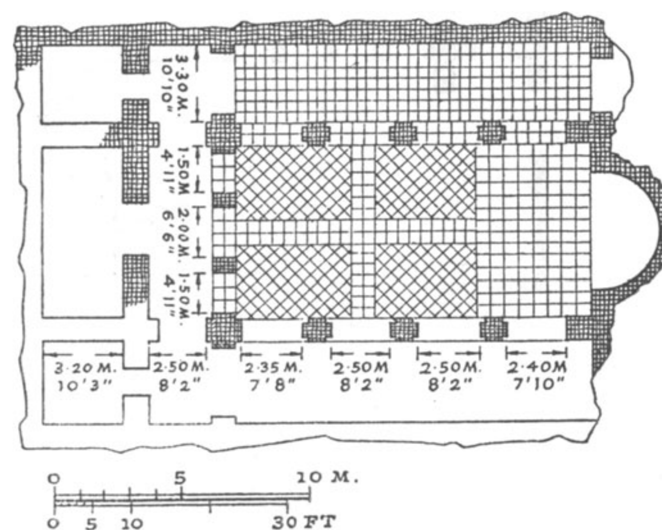


Fig. 102. CHURCH AT SVINJARICA. PLAN

Three different types have been identified as dating from the sixth century: basilical, cruciform and single naved. The church at Svinjarica (Fig. 102) is a basilica with a nave and two aisles, one, possibly more protruding apses, rounded inside but with a three-sided exterior, a narthex and an exonarthex. The exonarthex, of which little has survived, is divided into three parts, corresponding to the nave and aisles, and Petković, who excavated it, remarks that it probably comprised two towers flanking a portico. A tribelon connects the narthex and the nave and there are no signs of a closed sanctuary or of parabemata. Brick was used for the walls and for the piers lining the nave. These piers present a cruciform shape through having pilasters on each of their four sides.

A basilica with a nave and two aisles has also been found at Kalaja near Radinovac (Fig. 103). Its single apse is rounded inside with a three-sided exterior.

The lines of columns end in walls projecting from each side of the apse, giving the impression of side chambers at the eastern ends of the aisles similar to the 'Synagogue 'Church at Stobi. No exonarthex has been revealed, but the narthex is almost identical in its ground plan with the exonarthex of the basilica

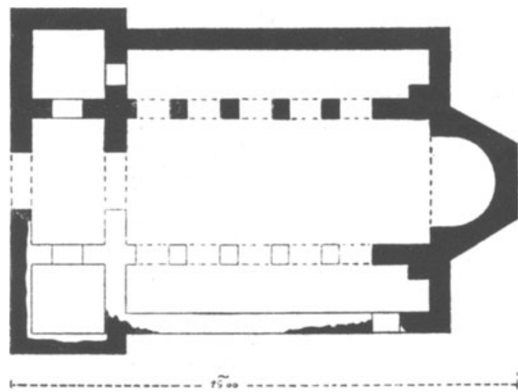


Fig. 103. CHURCH AT KALAJA, NEAR RADINOVAC. PLAN

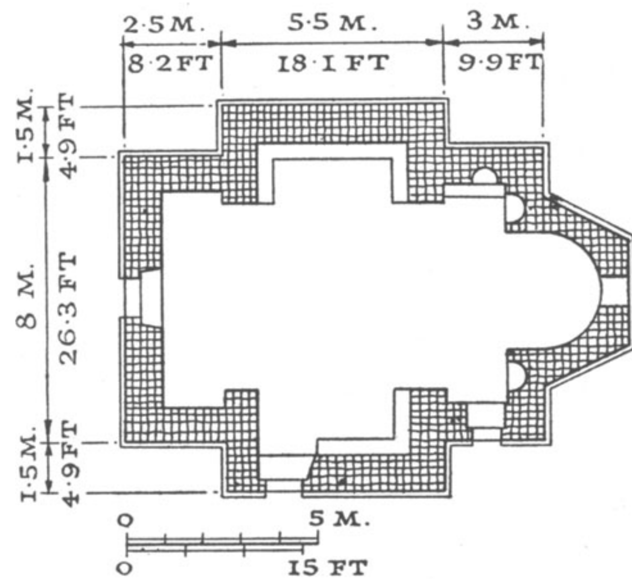


Fig. 106. CHURCH AT SJARINA. PLAN

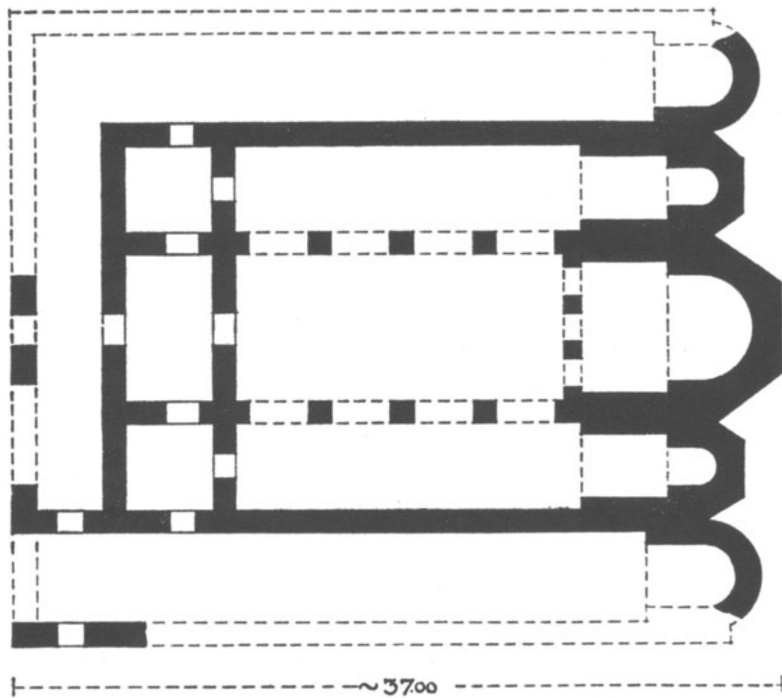


Fig. 104. CHURCH AT ĆURLINE. PLAN

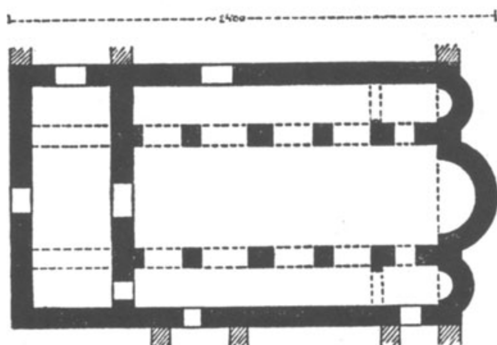
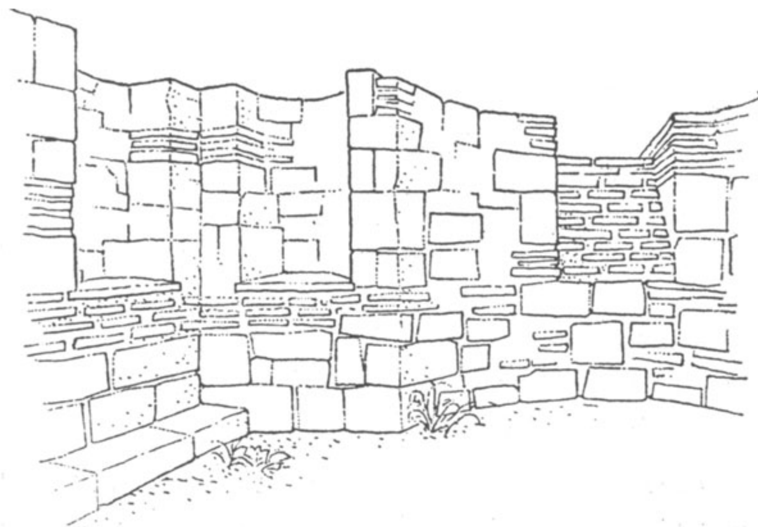


Fig. 105. CHURCH AT PROKUPLJE. PLAN

(*Below*)
Fig. 107. CHURCH AT SJARINA. INTERIOR



at Svinjarica and probably also consisted of a towered portico.

These two basilicas can be compared with two others situated farther to the north, the churches of Ćurline (Fig. 104) and Prokuplje (Fig. 105), belonging to the Naissus complex of fortified centres. Both of them are triple apsed. Both have clear indications of parabemata. In Ćurline these are particularly marked, and in this church the bema, moreover, is separated from the nave by two substantial pillars. The ground plans of the narthices of both churches closely resemble that of Kalaja, but although both have a single central western entrance it is difficult to judge whether they may be considered as twin towered structures flanking single porticoes. The church at Prokuplje does not appear to have an entrance from the northern section of the narthex into the corresponding aisle.

Two types of cruciform church are found in this area. The first is represented by the small church of Sjarina (Figs. 106, 107). This is in the form of a free cross with squat north and south arms that project only a metre and a half beyond the walls of the nave. A single, protruding eastern apse has a rounded interior and a three-sided exterior. Pilaster-like projections extending into the nave from the north and south arms give an impression, enhanced by the presence of three doorways, of a definite division into narthex, nave and sanctuary.

The second cruciform type is a trefoil. One occurs at Kuršumlija in the Church of the Holy Virgin (Fig. 108), another a short distance beyond the southern suburbs of Caričin Grad (Fig. 109), and a third at Klisura (Fig. 111). The first two are identical in plan. Both have projecting eastern apses that are rounded inside but three-sided on the exterior, and two others, rounded inside and out, which jut from the middle of the north and south walls. The arrangement of the narthex of the church at Kuršumlija, which was rebuilt in the twelfth century, is not entirely clear, but all available evidence points towards its construction on lines closely similar to that near Caričin Grad, which was excavated by Mano-Zisi a few years ago, and the ground plan of which indicates two rooms jutting north and south of the walls of the nave and enclosing a portico leading from an atrium into the church.

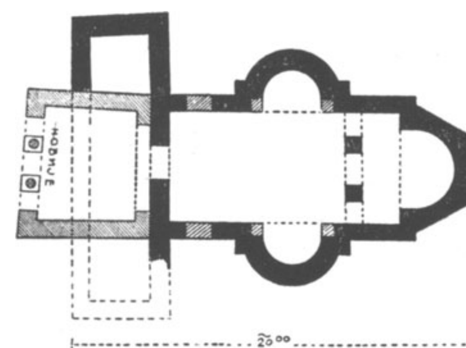


Fig. 108. CHURCH OF THE HOLY VIRGIN, KURŠUMLIJA. PLAN

In both churches foundations of chancel screens

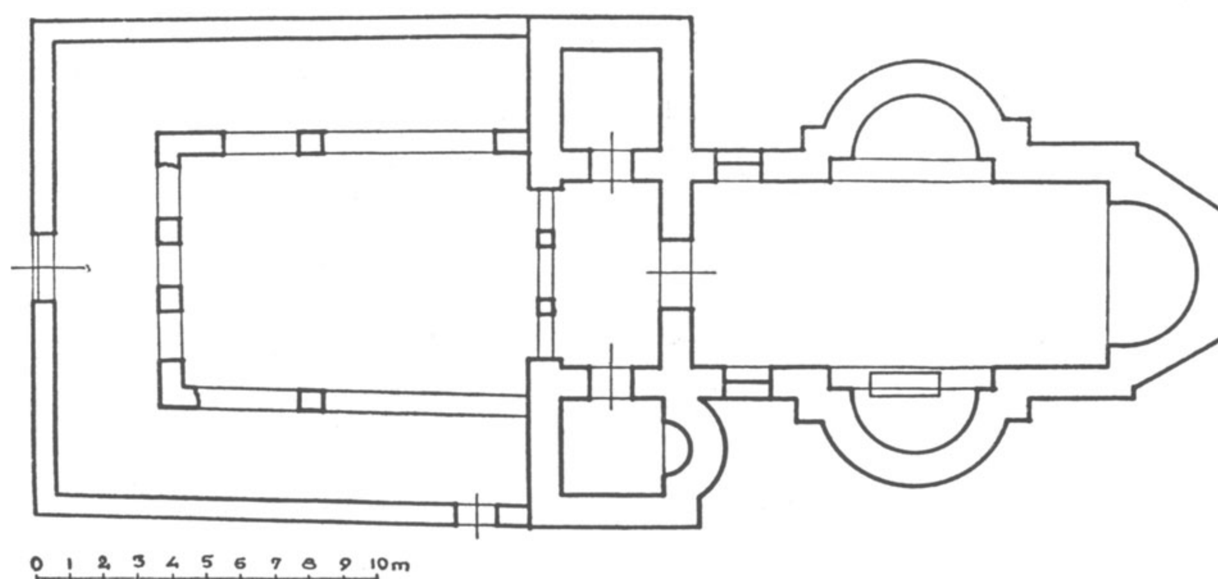


Fig. 109. TREFOIL CHAPEL OUTSIDE THE SOUTHERN SUBURBS OF CARIČIN GRAD. PLAN

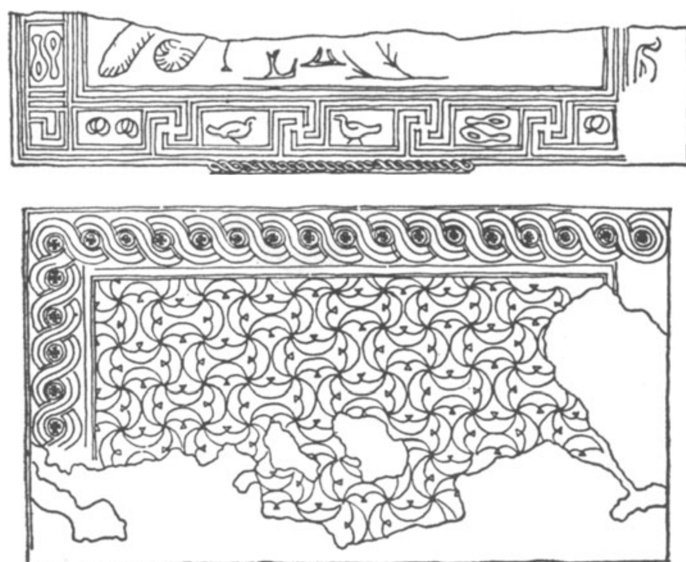


Fig. 110. TREFOIL CHAPEL OUTSIDE THE SOUTHERN SUBURBS OF CARIČIN GRAD. Remnants of mosaic floor

indicate that the eastern arm of the cross was marked off to be the sanctuary and in each church a tomb was discovered in the south apse. In the church near Caričin Grad portions of decoration have also survived including some of the mosaic floor of the narthex portico. Similar patterns appear in the Baptistery and in the South Church of Caričin Grad. A small section of mosaic floor was also found on the south side of the nave. The border repeats the design of the outer parts of the South Church nave's central strip and, from the remaining fragments of mosaic within the border, Mano-Zisi has reconstructed a composition of two peacocks on each side of a vase, from which springs a vine [1] (Fig. 110).

The excavations revealed that mosaics and wall paintings were both used on the walls of the nave, but it appears that the latter replaced the former after the original construction of the church.

Two Ionic-impost capitals, similar to some of those from the South Church, have also been found. Other sculptured remains include fragments of the chancel screen and a Corinthian pilaster capital with what are described as elongated forms of acanthus leaves.

The tomb in the south apse, the rich decoration occurring in such a relatively small building, and its situation a short distance beyond the limits of Caričin Grad's suburbs, give the impression that this church may have been a private memorial chapel belonging to a wealthy provincial official or landowner. One can imagine it originally standing in the grounds of a large estate, with the spacious and comfortable country mansion of the proprietor close at hand. Unfortunately, such a position was vulnerable in the event of a raid on a large enough scale to force the garrisons into their fortified strongholds while the countryside around was looted and set in flames. It is easy to appreciate that when it was possible to restore the chapel, this had to be done on a more modest scale. Even so, the colours of the paintings on the walls had no time to lose their freshness before they, too, were tumbled to ruin.

[1] G. Mano-Zisi, 'The Excavations of Caričin Grad, 1949–52', *Starinar*, 1952–53, pp. 154–6 (Serbian).

The third example of a trefoil plan, at Klisura, follows closely similar lines. The principal difference lies in the fact that the lateral apses are here smaller in relation to the large eastern apse, which is rounded inside and out. The church has been less thoroughly excavated than the trefoils at Kuršumlija and near Caričin Grad, but it appears to possess the same form of narthex with side chambers jutting north and south of the walls of the nave. At Klisura, however, unlike its two sister churches, the northern chamber is apsed. A small cruciform honephterion has been found in this apse, indicating that the chamber served a prothesis purpose.[1] The presumed southern chamber has not been verified by excavation.

At least five single-naved churches belonging to the sixth century have been excavated in the locality: at Sveti Ilija (Figs. 112, 113) sited on a fortified hillock on the outskirts of Caričin Grad, at Sakicol (Figs. 114,

[1] G. Stričević, 'The Diaconicon and Prothesis in Early Christian Churches', *Starinar*, 1958–59, pp. 60–6 (Serbian).

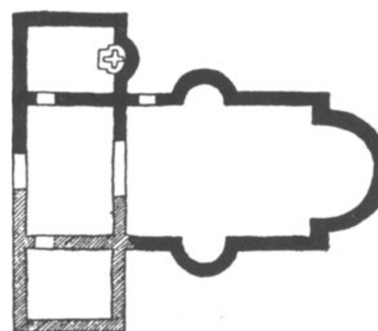


Fig. 111. CHURCH AT KLISURA. PLAN

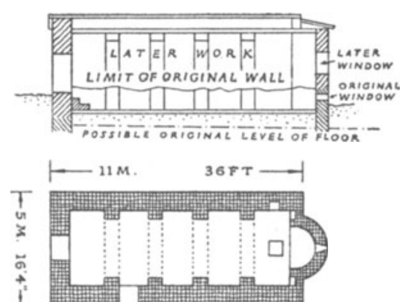


Fig. 112. CHURCH AT SVETI ILIJA. Plan and section (Reconstruction by Deroko and Radojčić)

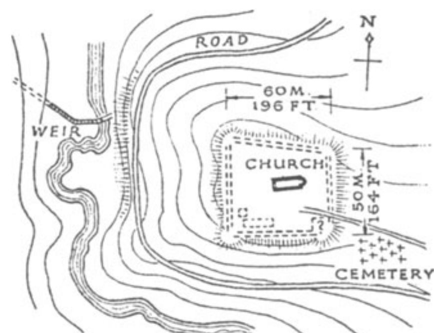


Fig. 113. FORTRESS AT SVETI ILIJA AND ENVIRONS

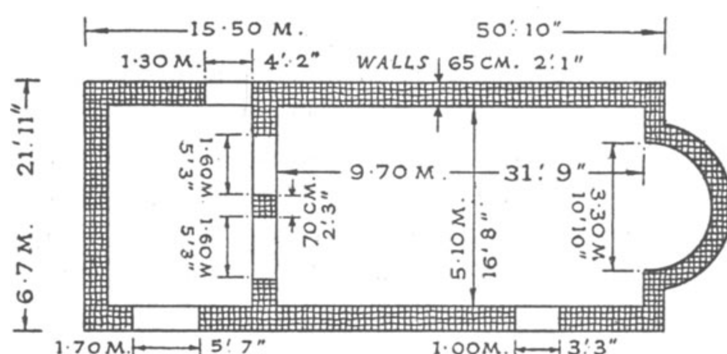


Fig. 114. CHURCH AT SAKICOL. PLAN

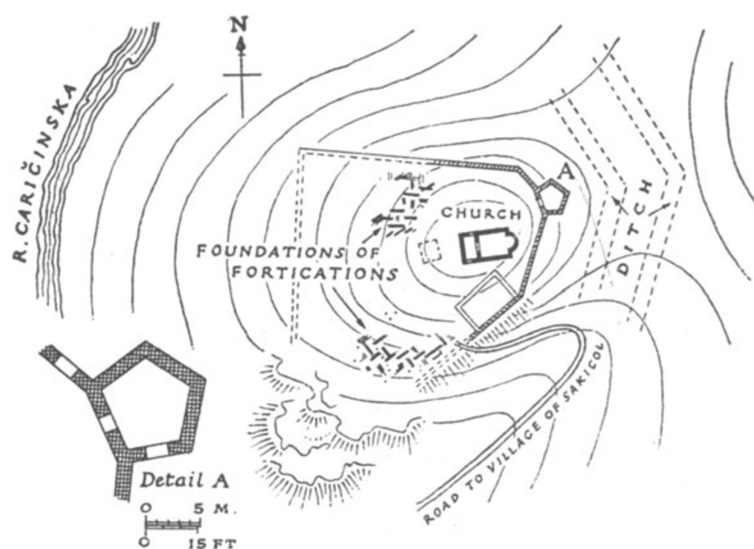


Fig. 115. FORTRESS AT SAKICOL AND ENVIRONS

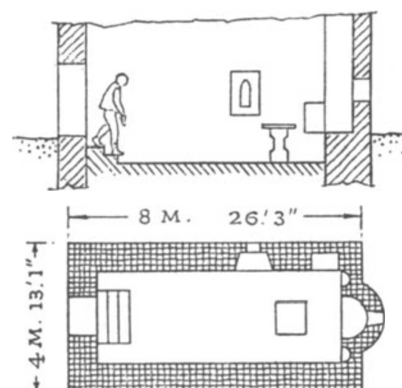


Fig. 116. CHURCH AT TRNOVA PETKA. Section and plan

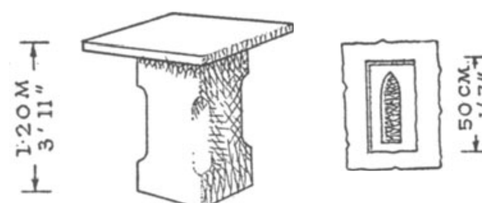


Fig. 117. CHURCH AT TRNOVA PETKA
Altar and north window

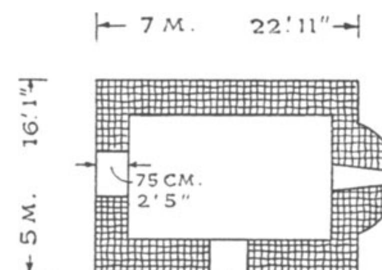


Fig. 118. CHURCH AT ZLATA. PLAN

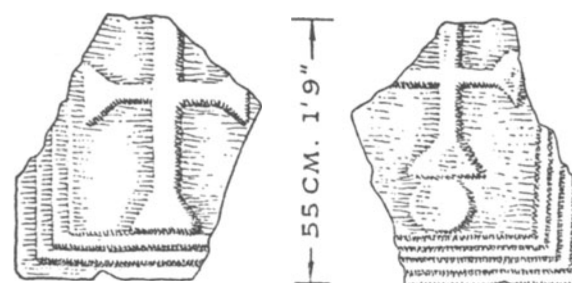


Fig. 119. CHURCH AT ZLATA
Fragments of slabs from chancel screen

115), another fortress a short distance to the north, at Trnova Petka (Figs. 116, 117), whence an aqueduct carried water to Caričin Grad 10 kilometres away, at Zlata (Figs. 118, 119) and at Rujkovac (Fig. 120). The first four of these small churches were simply constructed buildings with single, protruding apses, rounded inside and out. From the pilaster-like

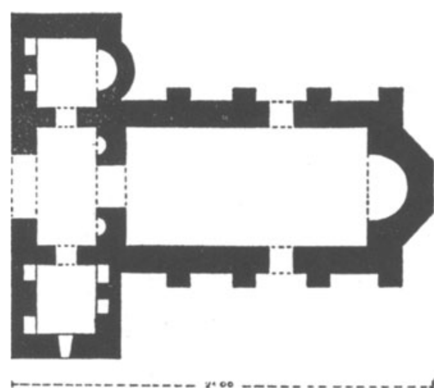


Fig. 120. CHURCH AT RUJKOVAC. PLAN

projections appearing on the plan of Sveti Ilija it seems likely that the roof of at least this church may have been barrel-vaulted. Their small dimensions and their situations make it reasonable to assume that, with the possible exception of the church at Zlata, which was a city of considerable size that still awaits excavation, these are examples of chapels erected to serve the garrisons of the local forts.

The church at Rujkovac is distinguished from the others by its exterior buttressing of the walls of the nave, probably to support a barrel-vault, by its apse, which has a three-sided exterior, and by its narthex, from which two rooms project north and south of the main body of the church. The northern of these two rooms has an eastern apse, rounded inside and out. The ground plan revealed by the excavations indicates the likelihood of another example — this time attached to a single-naved basilica — of a western portico flanked by twin towers.

These churches bear little relationship to the Macedonian monuments we have been considering hitherto. That they lay on the extreme northern periphery of Hellenism, or even just beyond it, where Hellenic influences of earlier times had never succeeded in penetrating deeply, is not an explanation of such fundamental differences. For two centuries or more prior to the middle of the fifth, Thessalonica had been the cultural and artistic capital of Illyricum from the Aegean to the Danube. Then its influence had retracted in the face of the invasions, devastations and depopulation of the second half of the fifth century, and Justinian's policy of centralisation of administrative power in Constantinople was not conducive to its restoration. Nor, in view of the Macedonian city's record of obstinate opposition to the imperial capital, did it have any particularly persuasive claim for preferential support from a strong emperor.

In order to defend the Balkan approaches to the capital Justinian needed to dispose large numbers of troops and supporting services as settled garrisons. The Illyrian reservoir of military manpower, which had long stocked the armies of the Roman Empire, was now empty, in a large degree a consequence of the wars on Rome's distant Asiatic frontiers. Fortunately, a new reservoir was now available in Anatolia, the inhabitants of which shared many characteristics with those of the central Balkans.

In these circumstances, it is not surprising that we can find in Anatolia numerous prototypes of the small churches that have been excavated around Caričin Grad, and the relationship is all the more striking in that it has of necessity been for the most part translated from stone into brick. The towered portico is, in fact, none other than the 'Hilani' narthex, inherited by the Christians of eastern Asia Minor, northern Syria and northern Mesopotamia from the ancient Hittites. The single, protruding apse, rounded inside and polygonal outside was one of the common Anatolian forms. The cruciform or double piers or columns used for springing powerful arches in, for instance, Churches 1, 3, 4, 5, 15, 21, 25 and others around Bin Bir Kilisse in eastern Lycaonia are reflected in the nave colonnades at Svinjarica.

As an example of the central Anatolian basilica, Church No. 3 of Bin Bir Kilisse (Fig. 121) may be cited. Yaghdebash (Fig. 122) or Süt Kilisse, from the same neighbourhood can be compared with the cruciform church of Sjarina. A variety of single-naved churches have also been identified in the same region, both with and without narthices, as, for example, at Asamadi (Fig. 123) and Gelvere (Fig. 124). Such a simple form was not, however, specifically Anatolian, and the ground-plan without other evidence, such as the 'Hilani' narthex, is therefore insufficient to adduce its origins.

The trefoil plan, on the other hand, does not appear to be a form native to Anatolia, where it occurs but rarely. Gertrude Bell, analysing the views of various writers on the subject, concludes that a trefoil apse appears in Asiatic palaces probably as early as the time

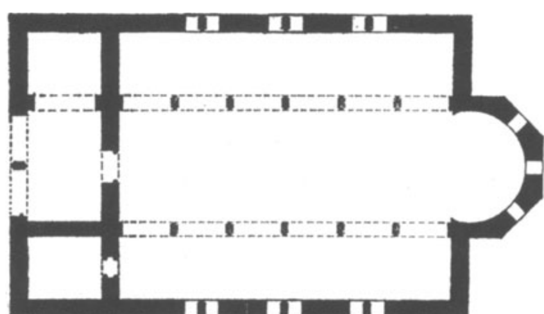


Fig. 121. CHURCH NO. 3, BIN BIR KILISSE, ANATOLIA. PLAN

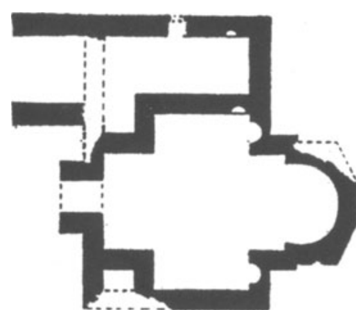


Fig. 122. CHURCH AT YAGHDEBASH, ANATOLIA. PLAN

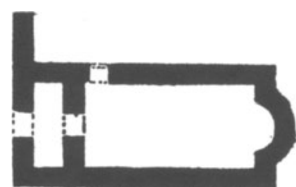


Fig. 123. CHURCH AT ASAMADI, ANATOLIA. PLAN

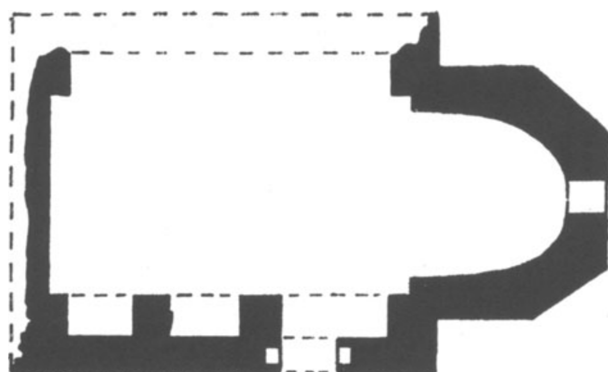


Fig. 124. CHURCH AT GELVERE, ANATOLIA. PLAN

of Solomon and that as a church form it is essentially memorial.[1] In palace architecture the trefoil maintained its popularity in Syria, where we know it to have been used in the early sixth-century Episcopal Palace at Bosra and in the eighth-century palace of M'shatta, which was built by a Moslem Caliph. The Holy Land has been considered the probable site of its first application to Christianity,[2] but at the same time and probably earlier it was certainly used for pagan funerary purposes in Italy and in Syria.[3] Its popularity as a form of Christian architecture spread rapidly during the fourth and fifth centuries. Examples such as the Palestinian churches at Ras Siagha on Mount Nebo, of St Theodosius at Deir Dosy and the foundations of a church at Taiyiba; as the Egyptian churches of the Red and White Monasteries at Sohag (*circa* 440) and the fifth-century church at Dendera; as Tebessa in Algeria; as the *cellae trichorae* at Sirmium and at Buda and Savaria (Szombathely) in Pannonia; and as S. Symphoroso and the East and West Chapels in the Cemetery of Callixtus in Rome, serve to show its wide geographical distribution. Justinian's reconstruction of the sanctuary of the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem followed a similar form. About the same time it was used in Bulgaria at Peruštica and in western Greece at Dodona and Paramythia. In Provence, the trefoil chapel on the island of St Honorat was probably built in the seventh century under the influence of Egyptian monasticism.

These few examples are sufficient to establish that by the sixth century the trefoil form had come to enjoy a very considerable degree of prestige in the Byzantine sector of Christianity, and that an important factor in this prestige may have been original associations with the Holy Land and, less consciously perhaps, Persian concepts of divine kingship.

In the first centuries of Christianity, the terms 'martyr' or 'witness' seem to have been used for all those who, whenever they lived, witnessed to the divinity of Christ. Possibly at one time they denoted only those who had been associated with Christ on earth, but by the Peace of the Church the meaning seems likely to have included the Virgin and the Prophets, although it was applied particularly to those who before dying for their Faith were favoured with a direct contact with God. Thus a 'martyrion' as used in the time of Eusebius was a monument erected at a place of witness, not necessarily upon the site of the death or

[1] W. Ramsay and G. L. Bell, *The Thousand and One Churches* (London, 1909), pp. 340–6.

[2] E. H. Freshfield, *Cellae Trichorae* (London, 1918), vol. II, p. 33.

[3] A. Grabar, *Martyrium* (Paris, 1946), vol. I, p. 113 *et seq.*

burial of one who had died in the persecutions. Against this background it is easy to see that in a Western Asian and Imperial Roman environment such as the Holy Land, the architectural form appropriate to a place sanctified by witness to Christ should be modelled upon the Oriental throne-room where sat the divinely appointed king-emperor. Hence, the trefoil, additionally hallowed by the fact that in sacred arithmetic the figure three, the number of the Trinity, represented the soul, developed within the Early Byzantine sector of Christianity as a form suitable for either a baptistery or a funerary chapel. As a baptistery it was, in the most literal sense, a place of witness, as well as symbolic of the resurrection to come, even to the extent of the three-figure grouping that had immemorially represented the Source of Eternal Life (Pls. 3-5 and Figs. 5-9). As a funerary chapel, the trefoil resurrection symbol was equally appropriate, and its association with the burials of the large number of saints put to death in the final great persecution made it a particularly favoured form for a private memorial chapel of an eminent or wealthy person. We must, therefore, class the trefoil church near Caričin Grad, and its sister churches of Kuršumlija and Klisura, as quite distinct in origin and purpose from the garrison churches erected by and for the troops and civilian settlers from Anatolia. The civil officials and local landowners came either from Constantinople or, in a few cases perhaps, from Macedonian and Dardanian families who had been wealthy before the troubles and had managed in some way or other to retain their properties or connections. Such people would affect the fashions of the capital and the court, certainly not those of another, more remote provincial region.

Finally, we should note the subsequent development of this trefoil form into a popular style of later Balkan church architecture. A new church was reconstructed upon the ruins of Kuršumlija in the twelfth century. What was its relationship to many of the Raška and Morava churches, to the numerous trefoil churches from Vatopedi, Iviron and Hilandar on Mount Athos to Curtea de Arges in Wallachia and Humor and Voronets in Moldavia? The answers to these questions are far from simple and are, in any case, outside the scope of this book, but the contribution made by Kuršumlija and its sister churches to the persistence of this particular form in the Balkans may be considerable.

The whole neighbourhood of Caričin Grad, which was only one of many points in the defence network of the central Balkans, teems with archaeological possibilities awaiting excavation. To mention but one instance, at Zlata, a short distance to the north-west and where a tiny chapel and sculptured furnishings from an early Byzantine church have been discovered, a city complex has been traced which Deroko and Radojčić describe as 'a big fortified city, larger than Caričin Grad'. It may even be that Zlata, and not Caričin Grad, was Justinian's foundation of Justiniana Prima.

21. THE BASILICAS AT LIPLJAN

From the archaeological viewpoint, the remoteness of the Caričin Grad region has been fortunate. Other centres which might have proved as rich, or almost as rich, instead of their ruins being left to decay undisturbed further by man, have been to a greater or lesser extent built over in subsequent periods. One such was Ulpiana (Lipljan), a Dardanian city which was renamed by Justinian 'Justiniana Secunda'. Here tradition associates a small, single-naved, thirteenth-century church with a fourth-century foundation built to commemorate two local martyrs killed during Diocletian's persecution. Although it is difficult to tell whether these foundations do actually date from the fourth century, certainly they are not later than the sixth.[1]

Since a beginning was made in 1953, considerable progress has been accomplished in excavating parts of the ancient city. In 1956, following reconnaissance by

[1] I. M. Zdravković, 'The Ancient Church of Lipljan', *Starinar*, 1952-53, pp. 186-9 (Serbian).

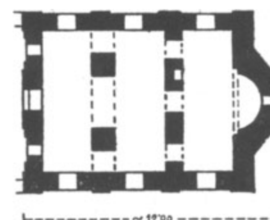


Fig. 125. SMALL SINGLE-NAVED BASILICA, LIPLJAN. PLAN

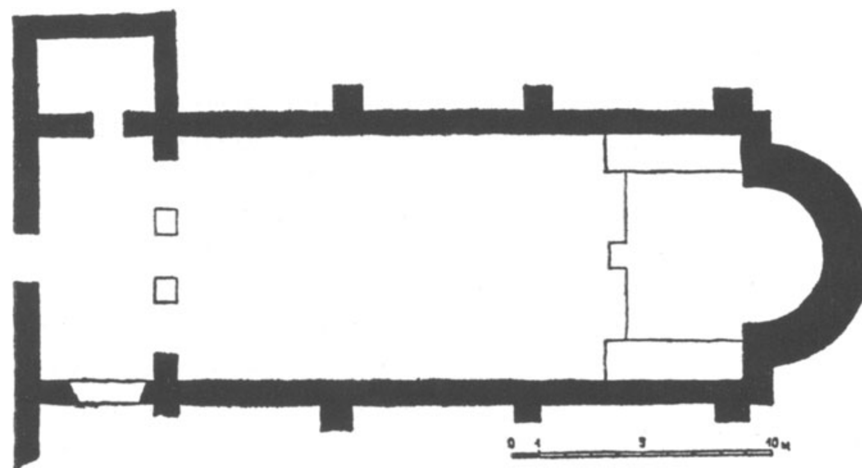


Fig. 126. LARGE SINGLE-NAVED BASILICA AT LIPLJAN. PLAN

aerial photography, the foundations of the greater part of a single-naved basilica, 34 metres long and 14 wide, were uncovered.[1] The building possessed a massive rounded apse. Presbytery seats were ranged opposite each other. Two floor layers were observed in the sanctuary, which also contained a small crypt and a marble altar that had earlier belonged to a Roman building. The floor of the nave and the lower floor of the sanctuary, both of which were at the same level, were composed of mortar and crushed brick. The later and higher floor of the sanctuary, however, was covered with mosaic.

A tribelon, its two pillars of serpentine marble standing on stone bases, connected the nave with a narthex, paved with bricks and of the same width as the nave. The single western entrance of the narthex used as its threshold a Roman marble tombstone. To the north and south of the narthex doorways opened into small rooms jutting beyond the nave walls.

The walls of the church, as far as can be seen, were of rubble bound with brick courses. The north and south walls were each strengthened by three buttresses, possibly with the object of supporting a barrel-vault. The excavators draw attention to two doorways, situated just to the west of the sanctuary, and point out that the excavation programme of 1956 did not allow them to investigate the possibility of their leading to prothesis and diaconicon chambers. However, in view of the sanctuary arrangements and the smallness of the doorways, this appears unlikely.

[1] I. Popović and E. Čerškov, 'Ulpiana, A Preliminary Report on Archaeological Research from 1954 to 1956', *Glasnik Muzeja Kosova i Metohije*, I (Priština, 1956), pp. 319-27 (Croatian).

Except for the shape of the outer apse, certain details of the two chambers of the narthex, the southern of which had not been fully excavated, and the tribelon, this Ulpiana basilica closely resembles that at Rujkovac, near Caričin Grad. Clearly we have here yet one more Balkan version of the Anatolian 'Hilani' narthex. Its unusual association with a tribelon is probably significant of the greater degree of Hellenistic cultural influence which would have existed in this more southerly and long-established city. Like that at Rujkovac, this church can be dated to about the middle of the sixth century.

Excavations conducted in the ancient necropolis have also yielded evidence of at least two other important buildings connected with a religious purpose. Both appear to have been Christian basilicas, and both bear the signs of several building phases corresponding to different periods in the city's history.

One of these basilicas, the excavators report, was built above a number of existing tombs. Its last building phase, to which the greater part of the structure belongs and which they date to the second half of the sixth century, is remarkable for the diverse types of masonry piers dividing the nave from the aisles and for the unequal level of the excavated floor. Beneath the nave floor were found tombs of various kinds, including ordinary burials, simple brick constructions, large tombs formed of stone slabs, and re-used sarcophagi. One tomb contained a skeleton buried after the Germanic manner of interment in a wooden chest.

In spite of a careful search the form of the apse could not be ascertained, tomb robbers having completely destroyed it at some earlier date.

The other basilica appears to have been built on a very similar plan to that shown in Fig. 126. In its single nave part of a mosaic floor was found showing geometrical motifs in white, black, yellow, red and blue, and part of a votive inscription. A narthex was also uncovered, paved with re-used marble slabs, and having two rectangular side chambers, which may point to a mid-sixth century date.

22. THE SIXTH-CENTURY FOUNDATIONS OF THE HOLY VIRGIN OF LJEVIŠA, PRIZREN

In the town of Prizren, the Hellenistic site of Theranda, lying due west of Scupi (Skopje), King Milutin's fourteenth-century church of the Holy Virgin of Ljeviša is built on the foundations of a sixth-century basilica. Although no more than its general plan can be made out to-day, Nenadović has shown that it comprised a timber-roofed nave and two aisles of Hellenistic proportions, each terminating in a protruding eastern apse, the middle one of which was three-sided on its exterior.[1] At the western end, as in the region of Caričin Grad, rooms again projected north and south of the narthex. West of these, moreover, were two others, the western walls of which were joined by a portico or by a wall with a portico in the centre, echoing once again the ancient Hittite 'Hilani' narthex.

23. THE BASILICA AT SUVODOL (Pl. 56)

Not far from the site of Heraclea Lyncestis, Suvodol lies 19 kilometres east of Bitola. Here, in 1931, ex-

[1] S. M. Nenadović, 'What were the Restorations of King Milutin in the Church of the Holy Virgin of Ljeviša at Prizren?', *Starinar*, 1954–55, pp. 205–26 (Serbian).

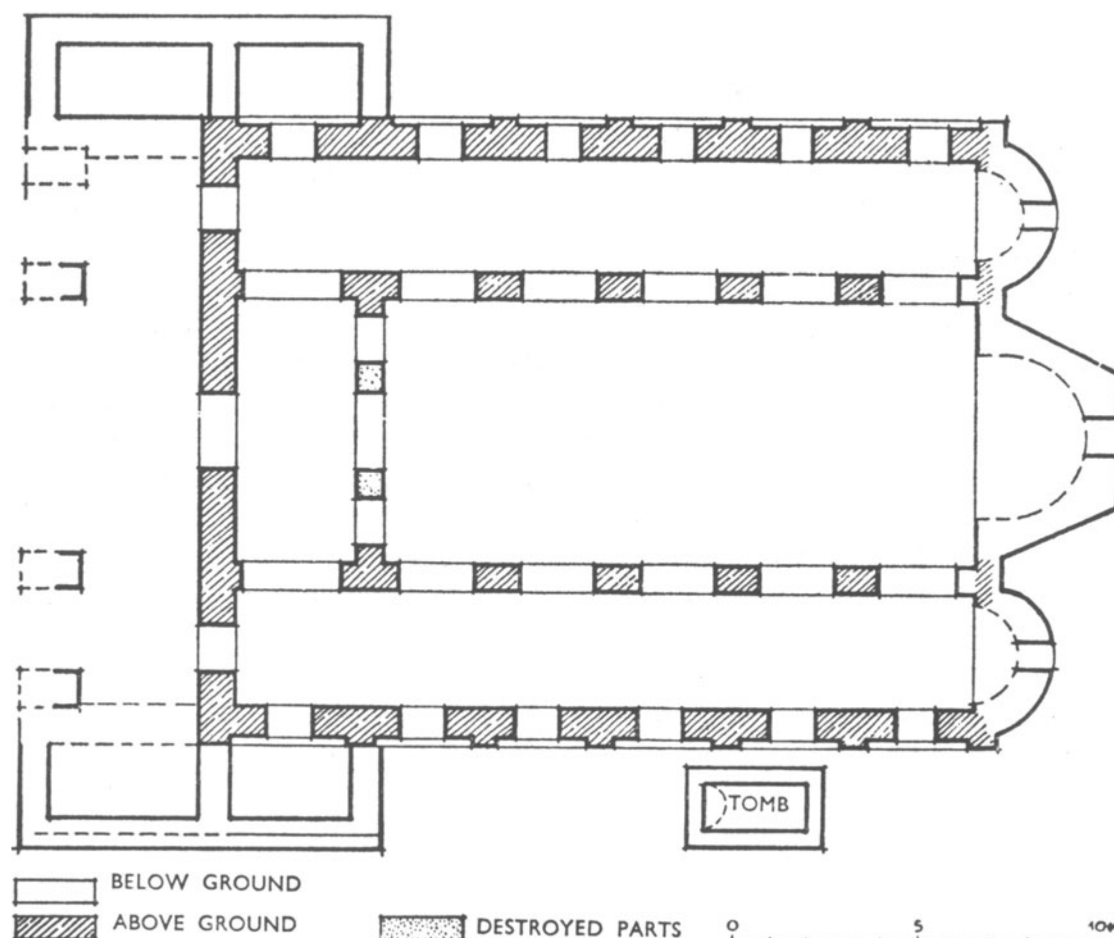


Fig. 127. SIXTH-CENTURY FOUNDATIONS OF THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY VIRGIN OF LJEVIŠA, PRIZREN. PLAN

cavations, undertaken not in consequence of an aerial survey but on the inspiration of a local peasant's dream, disinterred the ruins of an early Byzantine basilica.[1]

This basilica possessed several characteristic Hellenistic features such as a nave and two aisles with a single semicircular protruding apse, a narthex, a sanctuary consisting of a bema extending into the nave, but without parabemata, and galleries above the aisles.

The ground plan, however, reveals some divergences from the Hellenistic model. The nave, 15·60 metres long, is 6·20 metres wide, while the aisles are but 2 metres wide. The apse projects the length of the church 3·30 metres to the east, while the narthex and an exonarthex each add 3 metres to the west. The stone walls are uniformly 0·70 metres thick, except for the apse, which is 0·80 metres. Instead of columns, five massive brick piers, 0·90 by 0·70 metres, line each side of the nave. Finally, the narthex opens to the north and south into square, projecting chambers. The northern of these leads to another room to its west, lying flush with the exonarthex. A clumsily constructed room, apparently a later addition, was erected to the west of the southern extension of the narthex and to the south of the exonarthex. It is likely, but not certain, that a tribelon connected the narthex and the nave.

The nave was paved with stone slabs, but the bema, the level of which was raised by approximately 0·12 metres above that of the nave, possessed a mosaic floor arranged in three zones. The westernmost, lying inside the stylobates of the chancel screen, consisted of a fish-scale design in red, white and light violet tones. It was edged with a Meander border enclosing fruits and flowers. The middle zone, somewhat smaller and the site of the altar table, has been almost entirely destroyed: little more than a single diamond motif containing a quatrefoil remaining at the southern end. The pattern of the border on its northern and southern edges, a design formed by a series of semicircles, was repeated on a rather more spacious scale around the third zone. Of this, which was very slightly horseshoe in shape, only small fragments remain, the most important being the foot and part of the tail of a bird at the southern extremity.

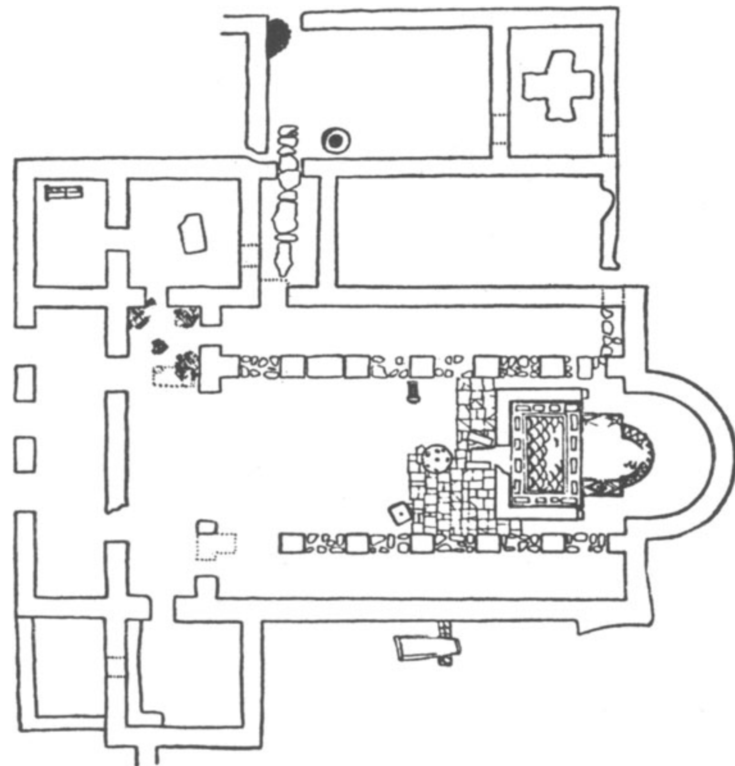


Fig. 128. BASILIČA AT SUVODOL. PLAN

Parts of the chancel screen have also survived. Its pillars were 1·90 metres high, the lower half being square in cross-section and faced with a plain linear design. The upper half was rounded and carried a simple form of Corinthian capital. A plain architrave, ornamented only by crosses at points where it rested upon the capitals, surmounted the whole. Three varieties of chancel slabs have been reconstructed. One, 0·88 by 0·75 metres, was decorated with a fish-scale design in relief. In another, 0·875 by 1·35 metres, a diamond-shaped lozenge within a rectangle enclosed a stylised acanthus pattern. Symbols of Christian significance appear in the corners of the rectangle. While the decoration of both these slabs may reflect that of the mosaic floor of the bema, the third type strikes a different though no less traditional note. It bears an eight-armed cross — formed by eight ivy leaves — encircled within a double ring of ivy tendrils, the ends of which extend outwards to terminate in a leaf upon which stands a cross.

A doorway near the west end of the north aisle led into a passage and two rooms, in the more northerly

[1] F. Mesesnel, Preliminary Report in *Bulletin Scientifique de Skoplje* (Skopje, 1932), p. 202 (Serbian); 'Die Ausgrabungen einer altchristlichen Basilika in Suvodol' (*Acts of the IVth International Congress of Byzantine Studies*), *Bulletin de l'Institut Archéologique Bulgare*, vol. x (Sofia, 1936), pp. 184–94.

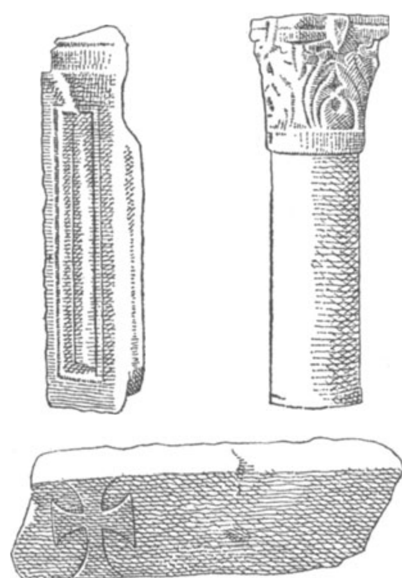


Fig. 129. BASILICA AT SUVODOL. Fragments of pillars and the architrave from the chancel screen

of which the ground-plan shows a cross-like form. The excavators report this room to have been used as a kitchen and the cross-like shape to have been a hearth. Such a use certainly belongs to a later period. One wonders whether this part of the building might not originally have been a baptistery, with a cross-shaped baptismal pool that was later converted to a profane and mundane function.

Time and events were certainly ruthless with the structure of the church itself. It was probably burnt and reduced to ruins when the Slavs finally completed their conquest of the countryside about the end of the sixth century. Later, following the conversion of the Slavs, a smaller church was built from the nave and apse by walling-up the spaces between the piers. In time, this, too, was destroyed, perhaps under the Turkish regime. Finally, a tiny, primitive chapel, constructed among the ruins of the western part of the south aisle, served the humble needs of the reduced and poverty-stricken community.

It is interesting to compare the Suvodol basilica with that of Prizren. Their western ends are closely similar, particularly the Anatolian-type annexes of their narthices. Yet, in both cases, and especially in Suvodol, the Hellenistic influence remains strong, a contrast with Caričin Grad which geographical location and its cultural traditions may explain. The same reasons may account for the absence of the Syrian influences which are so prominent in the eastern districts of Macedonia.

Mesesnel dates this church to the first half of the sixth century; Nikolajević-Stojković, on the evidence of the sculptured fragments, supports the middle of the sixth.[1] These datings certainly accord with the historical and social context.

24. THE SIXTH-CENTURY CITY OF CARIČIN GRAD

The sixth-century city of Caričin Grad (or Tsarichin Grad), to use the name by which it is known to-day, was built on a neck of rising ground at the fork of two small rivers, the Svinjaricka and the Caričinska, which enclose it on the east, north and west sides. The site lies six kilometres from modern Leban and an approximately equal distance from Niš and Priština. First excavated in 1912, in the intervals between wars, a very considerable amount of work has since been and is still being accomplished that has added a great deal to our knowledge of the central Balkans in the sixth and seventh centuries. The highest part, or acropolis, of the city, contained the episcopal quarter and was enclosed within powerful ramparts having an eastern gate flanked by two towers. A paved road, lined by porticoes, ran from this gate in a west-south-westerly direction to divide the episcopal quarter into two.

The buildings within the acropolis, for all its fortified character, all appear to have been constructed for ecclesiastical and not for defensive purposes. They were grouped around a large basilica, situated to the south of the paved road. A baptistery, constructed in the form of a quatrefoil inscribed within a square, was connected by a portico to the south aisle of the basilica, and to the east of this was a free standing hall or chapel with a projecting rectangular eastern chamber or apse. North of the road was the Episcopal Palace, containing a large and splendid ceremonial hall in three sections with several side chambers, some of which were capable of being used for meetings and other ecclesiastical functions. Other rooms served as living quarters and episcopal offices. Hypocausts provided heating for all

[1] I. Nikolajević-Stojković, *Early Byzantine Decorative Architectural Sculpture in Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro*, pp. 43-4, 90 (Belgrade, 1957) (Serbian with full French summary).

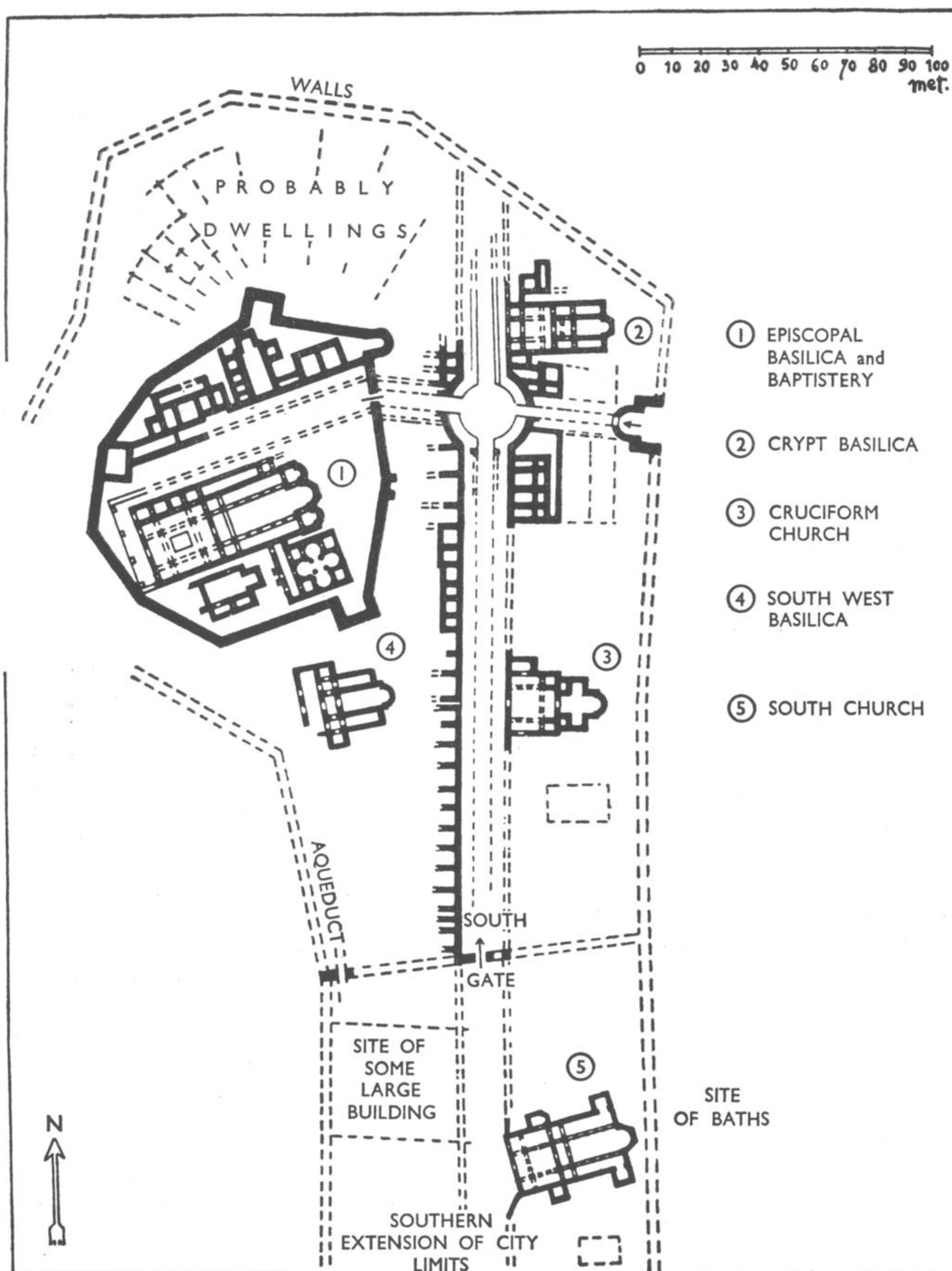


Fig. 130. CARIČIN GRAD. CITY PLAN AS REVEALED BY ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATIONS

this section. To the west were rooms which may have served as lodgings for visiting clergy or, perhaps, for civil functionaries from the capital. To the east were service quarters and workshops.

From the gate of the acropolis a road lined with porticoes ran east, intersecting a north-south road at a 'round point' or circus, and terminating at a U-shaped indentation in the eastern wall of the city. Contrary to earlier held opinion this seems to have served as an ordinary city gate, although excavation has indicated a solid construction pierced only by a drain or canal leading from the episcopal quarter to the river Caričinska. At this point was some kind of barrage or weir, probably for the purpose of working watermills, and it is likely that a bridge connected Caričin Grad with the outlying fort of Sveti Ilija.

The city's main axis was the north-south road and, although the city walls bulged to the west to include the episcopal quarter, even so the maximum breadth of the walled city was but two hundred and fifty metres compared with an original length of about three hundred and twenty metres from north to south. Sometime subsequent to the foundation of the city, the north and south walls were extended in a southerly direction to incorporate a further stretch of relatively high ground and give the city a total length of some five hundred metres. The second or outer of the two southern gates and the two corner bastions of the southern outer wall have been excavated. A round tower stood at the south-eastern corner, while at the south-west a rectangular strongpoint protected the entry of the aqueduct which brought drinking water into the city and filled the moat protecting the southern wall.

With its straight, well-laid-out streets, its circus at their point of intersection, all fronted with porticoes, Caričin Grad was typical of early Byzantine town-planning. Unlike most of its contemporaries, however, it appears to have been neither encumbered with earlier buildings nor built over in later ages, facts which give it a unique archaeological importance. Although much still remains to be accomplished, a number of sixth-century dwelling-houses and shops have been excavated, principally those lining the main streets and, in the north-east and south-east quarters of the inner city, the sites of two more churches have been discovered. The first, a basilica, is peculiar in that it has a large crypt beneath the nave and aisles; the second is built on a cruciform plan with western side-chambers. Another, of a rather more humble nature, was found immediately south of the acropolis.

In the southern part of the town, within the later extension of the walls, a fifth church has been excavated. This is a basilica with an eastern T-transept and two annexed chambers at the north-east and the south-east corners of the atrium.

The city of Caričin Grad was short-lived. It was probably evacuated by Byzantine forces during the first half of the seventh century, a mere hundred years or so after its foundation. An account of its final stages, as revealed by excavations, has already been given at the end of Chapter VIII.

25. THE EPISCOPAL BASILICA, CARIČIN GRAD (Pls. 57, 58)

The Episcopal Church was a triple-naved basilica with a narthex, atrium and subsidiary rooms which ran along its northern side and fronted on to the road. It was a large church, 22 metres wide and 64 long with the atrium, 37 metres excluding it. The walls were brick; stone only being used for later repairs. Four columns each side of the central nave separated it from the two lateral aisles. Petković, during the excavations of 1936, deduced from four massive slabs lying in the nave that the basilica carried a central dome,[1] but more recent opinion attributes a timber roof.[2]

The eastern end of the church was constructed in tripartite fashion, with the bema opening freely into the nave while the parabemata or pastophoria were structurally divided from the aisles by walls through which access could be obtained by doorways. Stepped presbytery seats ran along the north and south walls of the bema. Eastern apses terminated each of the three chambers of the tripartite sanctuary; the two outer being semicircular inside and out, the central one,

[1] V. Petković, 'The Excavations of Caričin Grad near Leban', *Starinar*, 1937, pp. 81–92 (Serbian).

[2] A. Deroko, *Monumental and Decorative Architecture in Mediaeval Serbia* (Belgrade, 1952), p. 49 (Serbian).

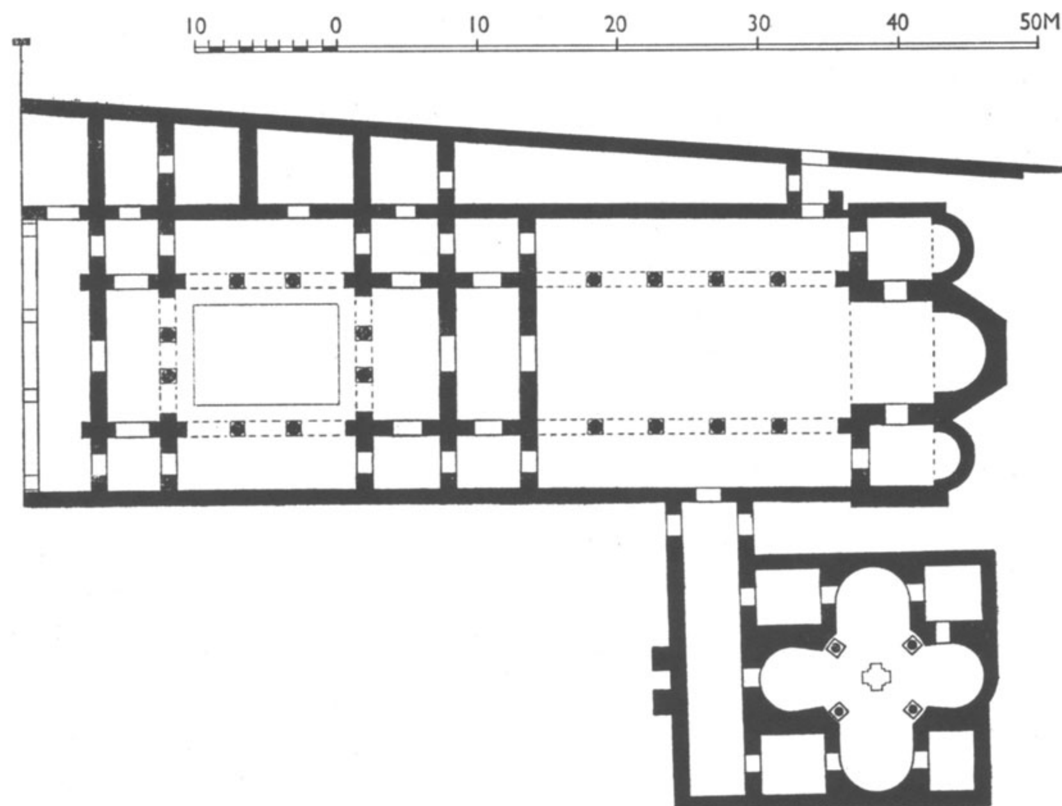


Fig. 131. EPISCOPAL BASILICA AND BAPTISTERY, CARIČIN GRAD. PLAN

which was larger, having a rounded interior and a three-sided exterior.

These sanctuary arrangements compare with those of Ćurline (Fig. 104), Prokuplje (Fig. 105) and Pirdop (Fig. 132) and further investigation and excavation may include others, among them Prizren, in the same category. Outside the central Balkan provinces we find an earlier, very similar arrangement of the sanctuary in the church at Dag Pazarli in Cilicia (Fig. 133) which is thought to have been built in the late fourth or early fifth century and reconstructed following a fire probably sometime during the fifth.

Three entrances leading from the atrium into the narthex corresponded with three from the narthex into the nave and aisles. There was no tribelon.

Although the atrium was lined with the usual colonnaded portico, a sunken pool, 12 metres in length and provided with walled sides, replaced the customary central courtyard. Water entered the pool through holes in the sides and the overflow was carried away by a pipe or drain situated at the western side just below

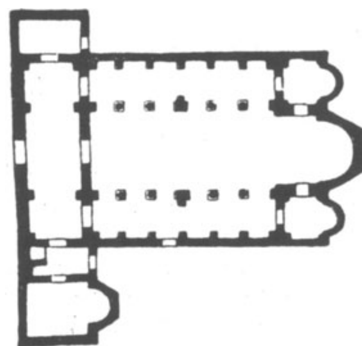


Fig. 132. BASILICA AT PIRDOP, BULGARIA. PLAN

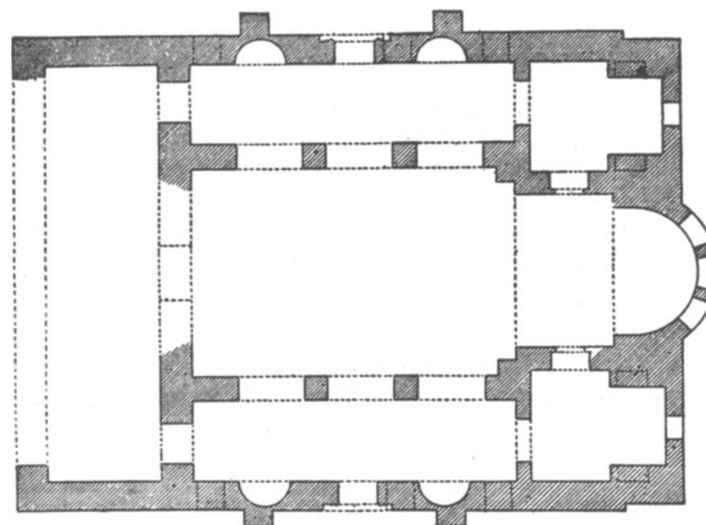


Fig. 133. BASILICA AT DAG PAZARLI, CILICIA. PLAN

the level of the floor of the church. No water source has been discovered by the excavators, who suggest, however, that there may have existed a medicinal spring, the curative properties of which perhaps provided a motive for the church's original foundation.[1]

Small sections of mosaic flooring have been uncovered in the nave. These reveal a series of squares, each containing either a bird, which may be accompanied by an olive branch, a cup, or an embroidered sack filled with fruit. Each square is enclosed within thick borders of a guilloche or rope pattern. However, too little flooring remains, and the sections are too incomplete and damaged, for the full design to be reconstructed. Nevertheless, its relationship to the floor of Room 5 in the Summer Palace at Stobi is evident. It is of particular ethnographical interest to note, too, that the embroidered sacks of fruit, which, with the birds, are features of the Caričin Grad and Stobi pavements — and of Macedonian peasant life to-day — appear in the narthex pavement of the church at Dag Pazarli in Cilicia.[2] Individual glass and stone tesserae of many different colours found during the excavations indicate that the walls also carried mosaics, but no clue remains to their subjects or treatment. If Caričin Grad was indeed Justiniana Prima, the favoured foundation of the emperor, then, perhaps, we must turn to the apse of S. Vitale in Ravenna to gain some idea of the one-time splendour of its Episcopal Church.

A few Corinthian-type capitals have survived which probably surmounted the columns of the nave. They are clearly contemporary with the church. The acanthus leaves have lost the grace of earlier periods, and animal protomes tend to replace volutes at the corners of the upper band. The capitals from the atrium, however, are of the Ionic-impost type. Nikolajević-Stojković, discussing these capitals, together with those of the South Church and the Crypt Church, writes:

> Their appearance illustrates a step in the transformation of Ionic-impost capitals into impost capitals. But whilst one would expect in such a case that the Ionic part would be reduced in favour of the impost, here the exact opposite happens: the Ionic part of the capital, although only decorative, is the chief characteristic of these monuments. On the front faces only very twisted spirals remain instead of plastic volutes, and the 'echini' have vanished without trace. Yet, the lateral faces have retained the plastic 'pulvini', which are sometimes smooth and sometimes decorated with tapering leaves, always joined in the middle. While the capitals of the Episcopal Church and the Crypt Church (also the triple-apsed church at Kuršumlija, and the churches in the village of Rudar near Leskovać and in Ćurline) have imposts decorated in the same way with crosses on the front faces, the only ornament on the back is the spiral.[3]

In this simple spiral decoration we have another distinct, if minor and unimportant in itself, link with Asia Minor, for Gertrude Bell illustrates the same motif on one of the double columns of Church No. 5 at Bin Bir Kilisse.[4]

A porticoed passage leading from a door in the middle of the wall of the south aisle of the Episcopal Church ran along the western face of the Baptistery, basically a quatrefoil inscribed within a square, which included four rectangular rooms in the corner spaces between the arms of the quatrefoil. The latter were rounded in the form of apses, the eastern and western being slightly horseshoe-shaped. The angles at the meeting points of the arms were hollowed out like segments of a circle and, in the four spaces thus left, pillars, with Corinthian-type capitals similar to those from the nave of the basilica, supported a central dome. Beneath the centre of the dome was a cruciform trench, 1·85 by 2·00 metres and 0·45 metres deep, lined with bricks and with a marble revetment, which must have been the baptismal pool. The similarity in plan between this baptistery, the cathedral of Etchmiadzin (483–4) (Fig 134) and St Hripsime at Vagharshapat (618) (Fig. 135) may indicate an Armenian influence.

Fragments of polished marbles and mosaic tesserae show that the central space and the four arms were richly decorated, probably with multicoloured marble skirting on the lower parts of the walls and mosaics on the upper parts, the central dome and the vaulted arms.

[1] V. Petkovič, *op. cit.* pp. 81–92.

[2] *Illustrated London News* (18 Oct. 1958), pp. 644–6.

[3] I. Nikolajević-Stojković, *Early Byzantine Decorative Architectural Sculpture in Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro*, pp. 50, 92 (Belgrade, 1957) (Serbian with French summary) (trans.).

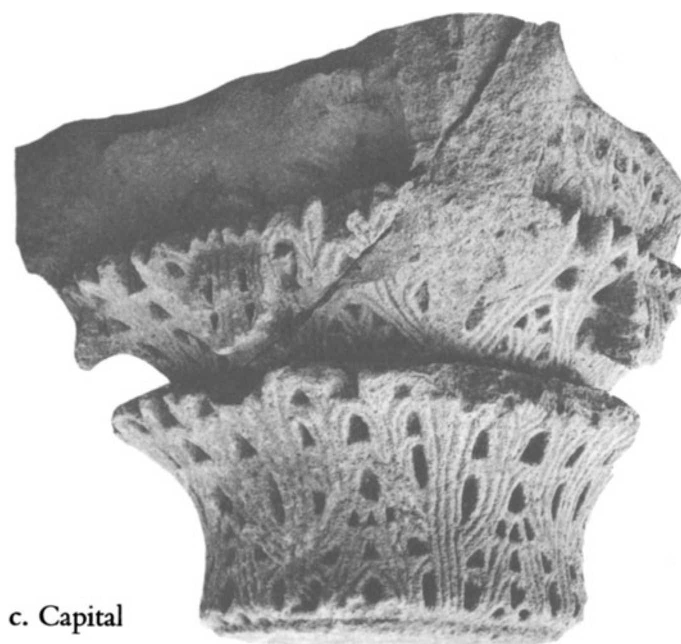
[4] W. Ramsay and G. L. Bell, *The Thousand and One Churches* (London, 1909), fig. 29.



a. General view



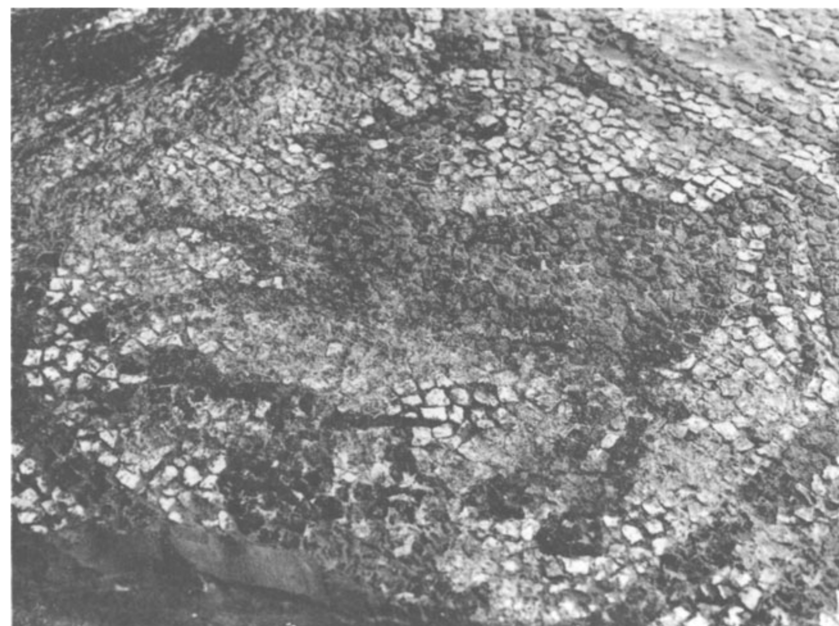
b. One of the four apses



c. Capital

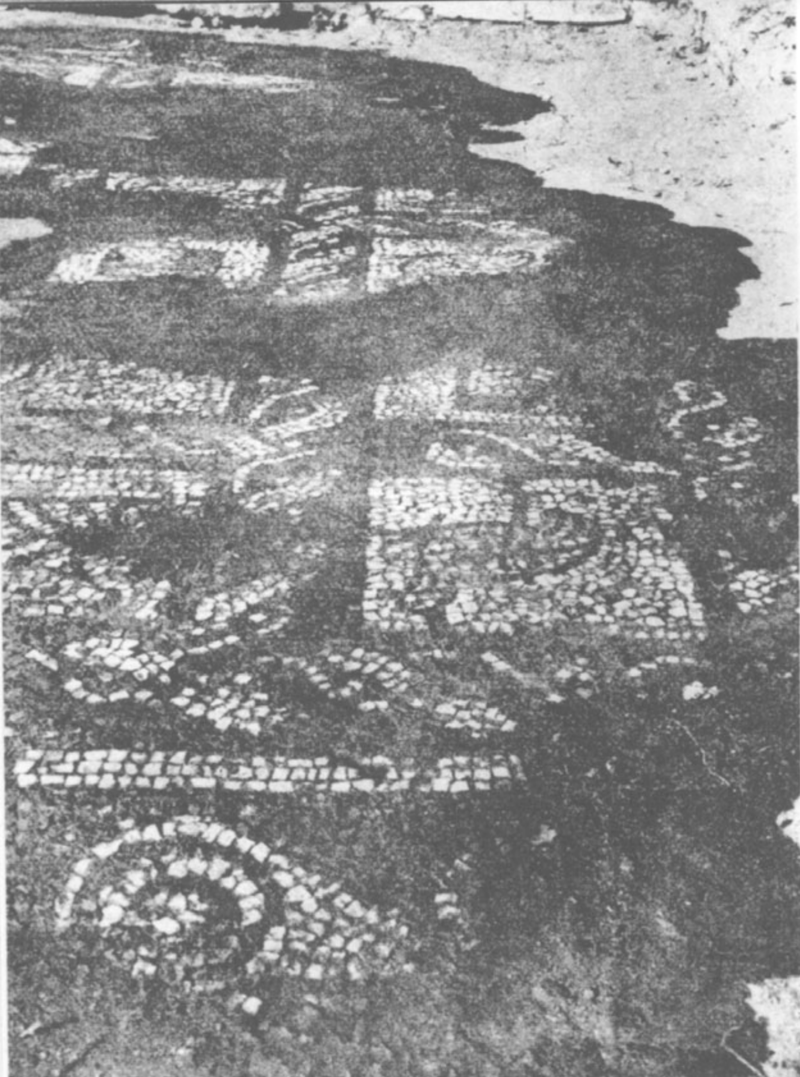


d. Detail from the mosaic floor



e. Detail from the mosaic floor

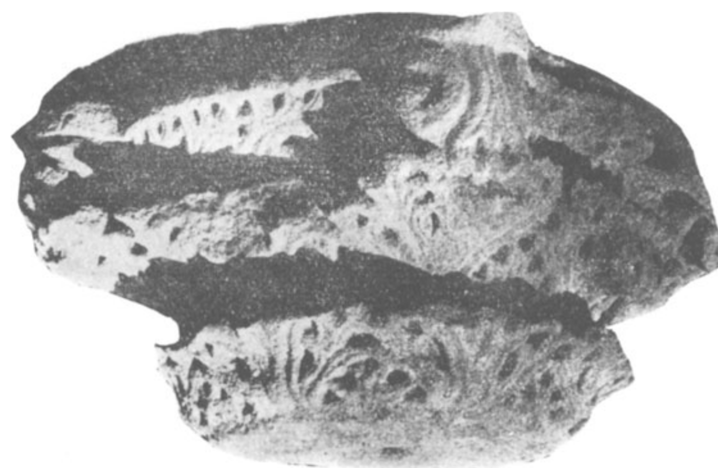
57 EPISCOPAL BASILICA, CARIČIN GRAD



a. Fragment of the mosaic floor in the nave



b. Fragment of the mosaic floor in the nave



c. Capital from the nave or baptistery

EPISCOPAL BASILICA, CARIČIN GRAD



d. Capital from the atrium: front and side aspects



e. Capital from the atrium: rear aspect

CRYPT BASILICA. CARIČIN GRAD

Mesesnel reports that only indistinct traces of mosaic flooring were found in the four corner rooms, but that all the arms of the cross were paved with mosaics displaying many different colours. In the north and south arms the designs were purely geometric; in the east and west arms they included animal and vegetable motifs as well. Mesesnel describes the decoration of the eastern arm as especially remarkable, depicting 'particularly lively representations of a hare, a foal, an ibex, a butterfly and so on'[1] (Pl. 57).

Although at least a century later than the baptistery of the basilica at Tebessa in Algeria, this quatrefoil or cruciform may have been developed independently. With either the tripartite sanctuary or the trefoil memorial chapel it proposed the sacred number seven (see page 36). If it is possible to draw any conclusions from so few examples as the two baptisteries at Caričin Grad and Stobi, it would appear that towards the

[1] F. Mesesnel, 'The Excavations of Caričin Grad of 1937', *Starinar*, 1938, pp. 179–98 (Serbian).

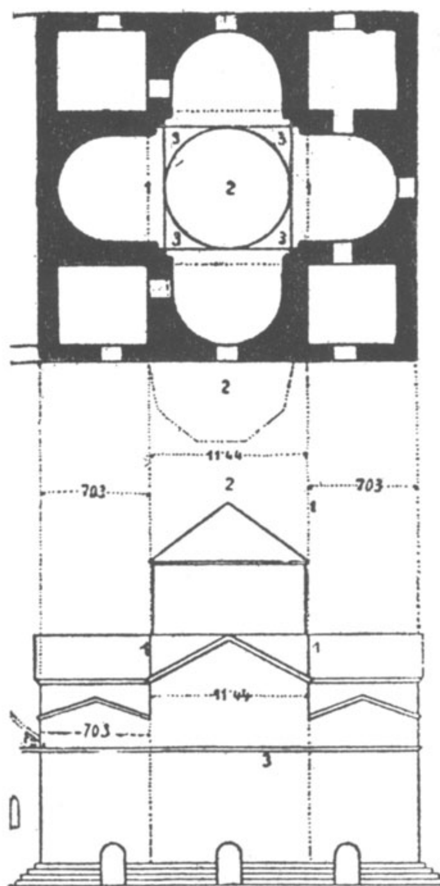


Fig. 134. CATHEDRAL AT ETCHMIADZIN, ARMENIA
Plan and elevation. (Reconstruction by Thoramanian)

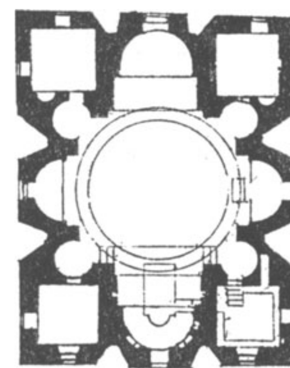


Fig. 135. CHURCH OF ST HRIPSIME, VAGHARSHAPAT, ARMENIA. PLAN

middle of the sixth century in this central Balkan region the quatrefoil appears to have been preferred as a baptistery and the trefoil as a memorial chapel.

It is likely that the Episcopal Church and its accompanying buildings would have been among the earliest to have been erected in a new city such as Caričin Grad. This would place them within the period 527–36, which Mano-Zisi designates as the first phase of the building of Caričin Grad,[2] an attribution which is supported by the style of the sculptured decoration.

26. THE CRYPT BASILICA, CARIČIN GRAD (Pl. 58)

In the north-east quarter of the city stood the Crypt Church, a basilica with an atrium, 35 metres long in all, which opened on to the north street. The main part of the church has not survived, but Spremo-Petrović, who excavated the site, has been able to reconstruct it as a basilica with a nave and two aisles separated by twin rows of four columns, and a single protruding apse with a rounded interior and a three-sided exterior. There was no narthex and three doorways led directly from the atrium into the nave and aisles.[3]

Beneath this superstructure was a large crypt, divided into three on the lines of the upper nave and aisles and possessing a similar form of single projecting

[2] G. Mano-Zisi, 'The Excavations of Caričin Grad in 1953 and 1954', *Starinar*, 1954–55, pp. 155–80 (Serbian).

[3] N. Spremo-Petrović, 'The Crypt Basilica of Caričin Grad' *Starinar*, 1952–53, pp. 169–80 (Serbian).

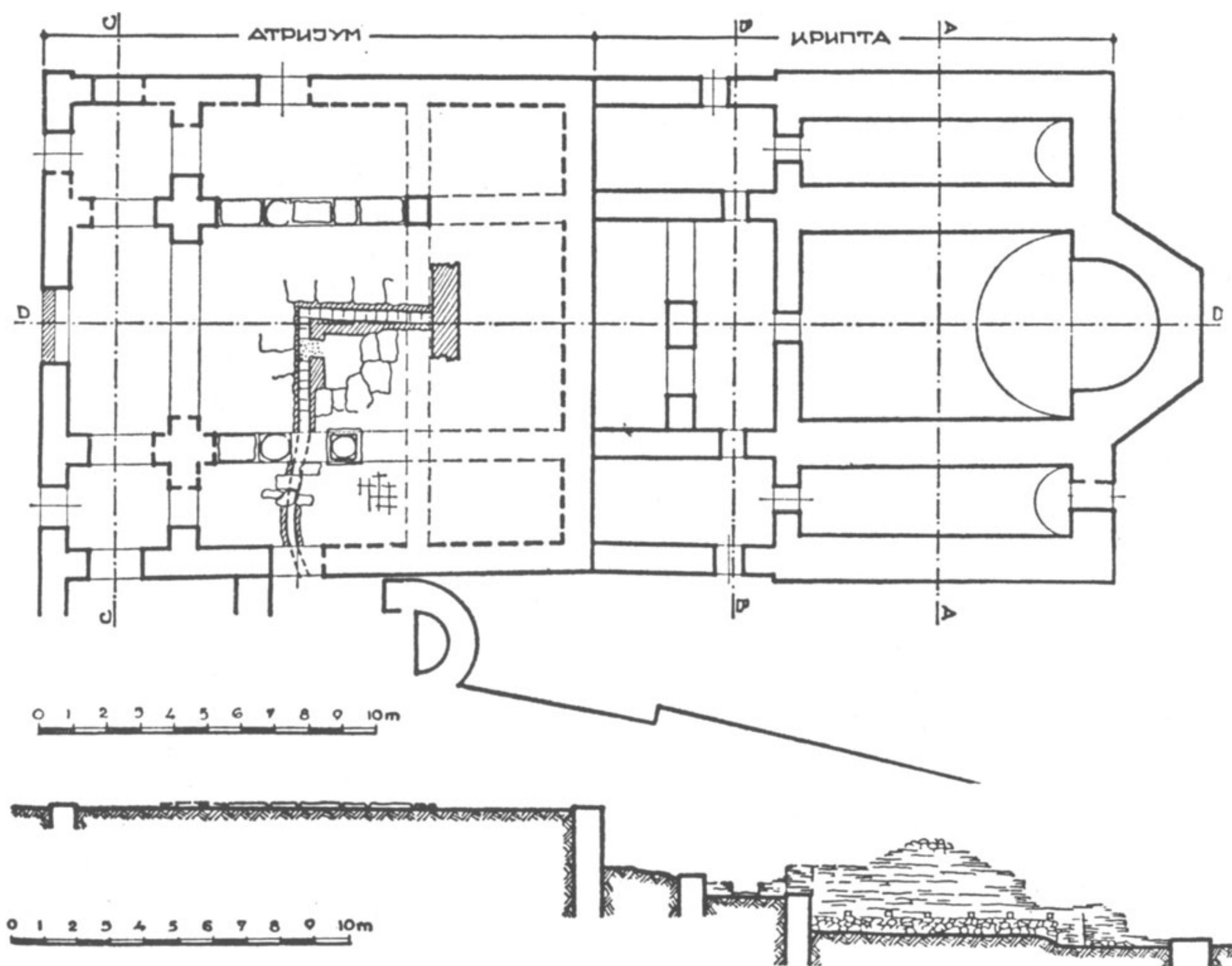


Fig. 136. CRYPT BASILICA, CARIČIN GRAD. Plan of the atrium and crypt with section showing levels excavated

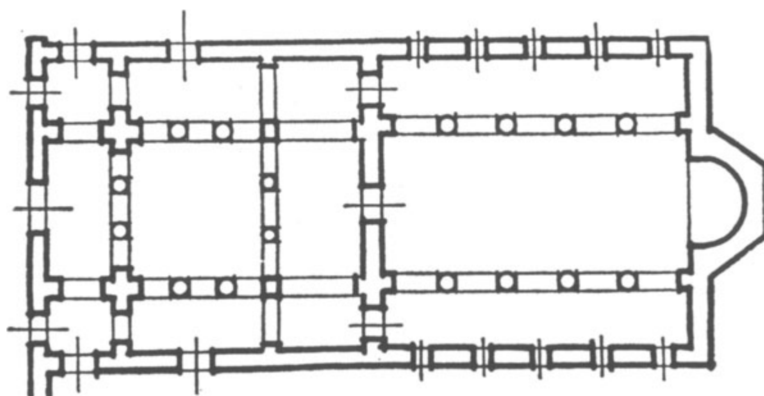
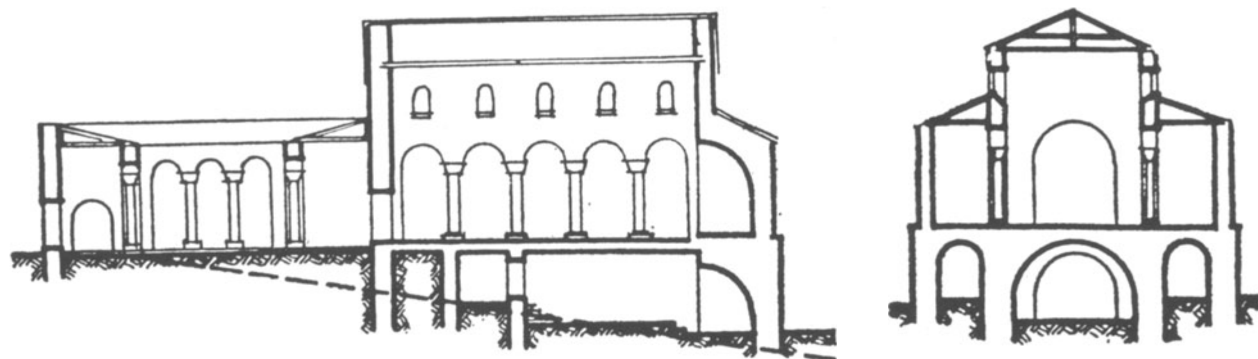


Fig. 137. CRYPT BASILICA, CARIČIN GRAD. Plan of the atrium and nave. (Reconstruction by Spremo-Petrović)

(*Below*). Fig. 138. CRYPT BASILICA, CARIČIN GRAD. Longitudinal and latitudinal sections. (Reconstruction by Spremo-Petrović)



apse. Unlike the superstructure, however, the crypt possessed a form of narthex, also divided into three sections, which corresponded to the western parts of the nave and aisles. As the church was built on ground which sloped steeply downwards from west to east, the narthex, nave and apse of the crypt were each stepped one lower than the other. The floor of the aisles, nevertheless, remained on the same level as the narthex.

The nave of the crypt measured 8·05 metres long and 5·67 metres wide. The aisles were much narrower, being only 2 metres wide. Massive outer and partition walls, 1·40 metres thick, of brick upon stone foundations, supported brick vaults, 0·60 metres thick, over the nave and aisles. No remains of vaulting over the narthex have been found and, since its walls were here only 0·90 metres thick, it is unlikely that this form of roofing was used. There was a doorway at the east end of the southern aisle, where the slope of the ground completely exposed the apse of the crypt.

The atrium consisted of a rectangular courtyard bordered with porticoes. The capitals of the columns were of the same type as those of the atrium of the Episcopal Church. A channel provided for the entry of a supply of water through the north wall into the central space.

The entire destruction of the upper part of the church and of all the mural decorations of the crypt leaves us with no direct clue to the specific purpose for which the church was founded. A church crypt was traditionally the site of the tomb or relics of a martyr, but it had also become the place of burial for leading church dignitaries. That the crypt should extend, in basilical form, beneath the whole extent of the nave and aisles, however, is unusual. In the basilicas of St Peter of Rome, St Demetrius of Thessalonica, and the Basilica of Bishop Philip at Stobi, the martyrium crypt was only beneath the sanctuary. The Early Christian cemetery crypts at Naissus (Niš) consisted of single chambers, as did those below the floor of the Constantinian basilica at Philippi. The latter were, moreover, constructed after the church had been built.

At Caričin Grad the crypt formed the foundations for the superstructure of nave and aisles and it is this characteristic which differentiates the church from others of the city and neighbourhood. For a martyrium erected in honour of a particular saint it is abnormally large, and surely the place for such a memorial would have been the Episcopal Church, in which neither a crypt nor a martyr's tomb have been discovered. On the other hand, it is too small to serve as a public cemetery church. Moreover, such churches were generally built outside the city walls, where ample space was available for the burial of the faithful.

Perhaps the answer is that it belonged to the same category as the Marusinac Cemetery Church outside Salona. Dyggve describes this as having 'an exceptional position as it has never been open to the ordinary members of the congregation, but only particularly privileged persons had access to it. All seems to indicate that the cemetery and its buildings are based on some foundation that has been able to retain the sole right to the martyrs buried here for a small circle of high clerical and temporal dignitaries.'[1] The Crypt Church of Caričin Grad lay outside the walls of the episcopal quarter, but in a privileged position within the city limits. Possibly it was built to be the private cemetery church of the bishops and, perhaps, of other leading dignitaries of Caričin Grad.

On these grounds, and on the evidence of the capitals from the atrium, we may regard the Crypt Church as belonging to Caričin Grad's first phase; probably about the third decade of the fifth century.

27. THE CRUCIFORM CHURCH, CARIČIN GRAD

In the south-west quarter of the city are the ruins of a Cruciform Church, the atrium of which fronts on to the main north-south street. This church takes the form of a Greek cross, with the western arm inscribed by two rooms.[2] Although the information so far available is somewhat meagre, the two inscribing rooms appear to correspond in some degree to the lateral sections of a narthex. To the west of this 'narthex' the foundations of a portico, flanked by two square rooms, each of which project the thickness of their

[1] E. Dyggve, *History of Salonitan Christianity* (Oslo, 1951), p. 76.

[2] V. Petković, 'The Excavations of Caričin Grad in 1938', *Starinar*, 1939, pp. 141-52 (Serbian).

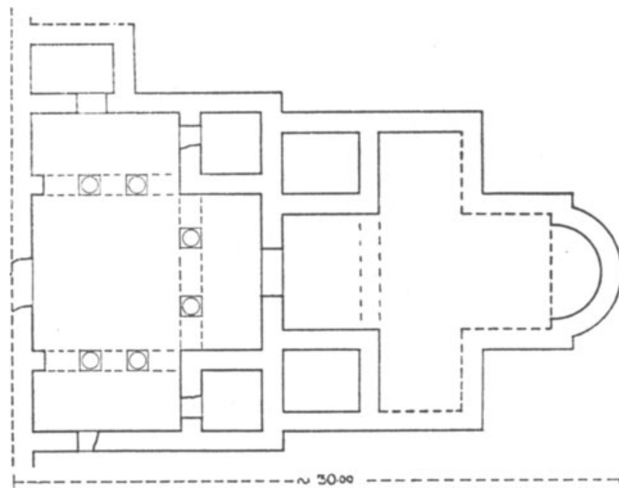


Fig. 139. CRUCIFORM CHURCH, CARIČIN GRAD. PLAN

outer wall north and south of the sides of the church, have been excavated. These rooms also form the eastern corners of the atrium, in which a wall and a street entrance occupy the place of the normal western portico. The total length of the structure is 30 metres; the church itself is approximately 17 metres from east to west and 16 from north to south.

Two different types of capitals are illustrated by Petković. One, obviously belonging to the massive pillars of the atrium, is a solid, extremely simple, Ionic-



Fig. 140. CRUCIFORM CHURCH, CARIČIN GRAD. Capital from chancel screen

impost capital. Its only decoration appears to be a medallion containing a cross. The second type, of which two have been found, is smaller; its form is Corinthian and its decoration consists of simply carved and highly formalised acanthus leaves. These two Corinthian capitals probably belonged to the chancel screen and indicate that this was of the high type carrying an architrave similar to that discovered at Suvodol.

In the architectural arrangement of its parts the Cruciform Church has certain points of resemblance with the crypt of the Crypt Church. The two 'narthices' correspond, as do the aisles of the Crypt Church with the north and south arms of the Cruciform Church. Moreover, just as the Crypt Church is likely to have been built with a funerary purpose in

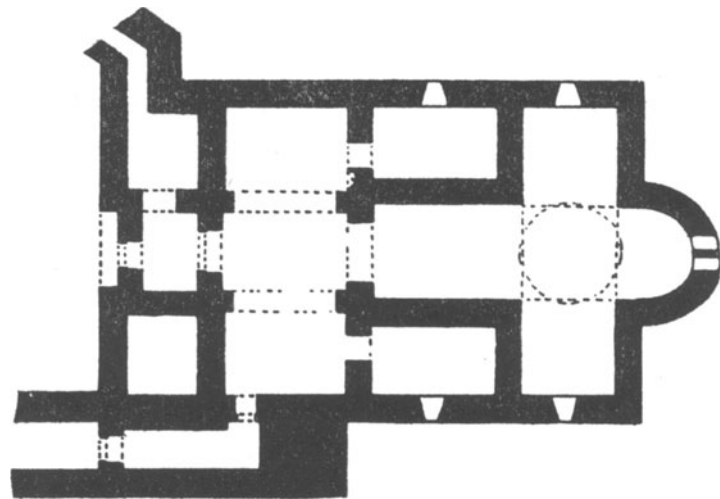


Fig. 141. CHURCH AT MAHALETCH, ANATOLIA. PLAN

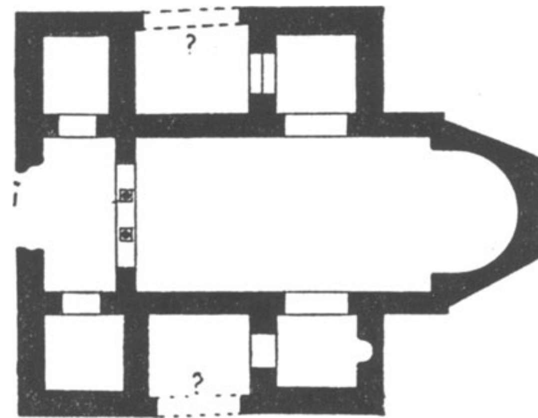


Fig. 142. CHURCH AT IVANJANI, BULGARIA. PLAN

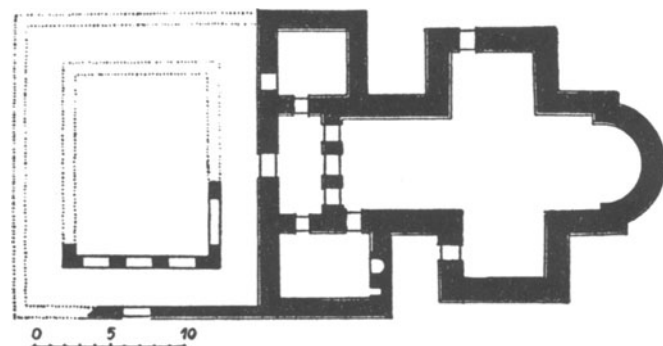


Fig. 143. CHURCH AT KLISE-KJOJ, BULGARIA. PLAN

mind, the cruciform plan was a particularly favoured form of a memorial church in eastern Anatolia. In this connection, too, the north and south arms of the Cruciform Church may be analogous to the side apses of the trefoil churches of Kuršumlija, Klisura and outside Caričin Grad, with the difference that one owes its inspiration to Anatolia and the other to Syria.

In view of the uncertainty concerning the exact liturgical purpose of the inscribing western rooms of the Cruciform Church, it is difficult to assess their importance. They have also been found to occur in Anatolia, as, for instance, at Mahaletch.[1] Without them, the church would clearly belong to the same type as those at Ivanjani and Klise-Kjoj in Bulgaria. Both these churches may be approximate contemporaries of the Cruciform Church and follow a plan which was to be adopted in the twelfth century by the Raška school of Serbia. The capitals indicate a date that is different from and probably a little later than either the Episcopal Church or the South Church. Perhaps we may assume that the Cruciform Church was erected sometime in the second half of the sixth century, possibly as a private chapel and memorial church of a military governor of Anatolian origin.

28. THE SOUTH-WEST BASILICA, CARIČIN GRAD

The last church to be excavated in Caričin Grad was not discovered until 1957.[2] It stood in the western part of the city immediately to the south of the episcopal quarter. Here the ground begins to slope steeply towards the south-west and it had been necessary to level the site before building could be started.

The church was a basilica with a nave and two aisles, all probably vaulted. Its single protruding apse was semicircular outside as well as inside, a Hellenistic feature which, in Caričin Grad, was shared only, and then to a modified degree, with the Cruciform Church. Low stylobates, each with four piers carrying arcades, divided the nave from the aisles. The stylobates and piers, like the walls and the floor, were constructed throughout of brick. A narthex, with openings into the nave and aisles, had three corresponding entrances from a western portico. Two more in its north and south walls led into square chambers which jutted beyond the sides of the basilica. Other doorways were sited at the eastern ends of the aisles, in the north aisle wall and in the east wall of the southern annexe. Because of the sloping ground the portico did not extend southwards beyond the narthex.

In contrast to the western end of the basilica which conformed to a pattern common to other churches in the region, the internal as well as the external arrangement of the apse was quite different from any other yet excavated in the neighbourhood of Caričin Grad. A stone bench, 0·50 metres high, which lined the apse wall, was covered subsequently to the building of the church by a subsellium reaching to a height of 0·85 metres. This structure was joined to stepped presbytery seats ranged opposite to each other on either side of the altar. We have already met such an arrangement at Voskohoria (Fig. 94) and probably at Ulpiana (Fig. 126). Mano-Zisi, who excavated this church, instances further parallels in Basilicas A and B at Nea Anchialos near Thebes, in Basilicas A and B at Nicopolis and probably in the Basilica of Bishop Philip at Stobi. The Greek origin of this form of sanctuary seems, therefore, to be in little doubt.

In its size, in all only 25 metres long, and in its execution, the South-West Basilica strikes a keynote of modesty and simplicity. Clearly it served inhabitants of Caričin Grad who belonged neither to the wealthy nor to the influential classes. It probably served the spiritual needs of tradesmen and artisans grouped in the immediate locality ; some shops and workplaces have been identified. Was this element then largely Greek ? Although four graves were uncovered, two in the nave (one a stone sarcophagus with a Latin cross on the covering slab) and two in the narthex, there were no accompanying inscriptions which might have provided a clue. The only other evidence of an ethnic nature found on the site belongs to the later Slav occupation.

[1] W. Ramsay and G. L. Bell, *The Thousand and One Churches* (London, 1909), pp. 241-56.

[2] G. Mano-Zisi, 'The New Basilica of Caričin Grad', *Starinar*, 1958-59, pp. 295-305 (Serbian).

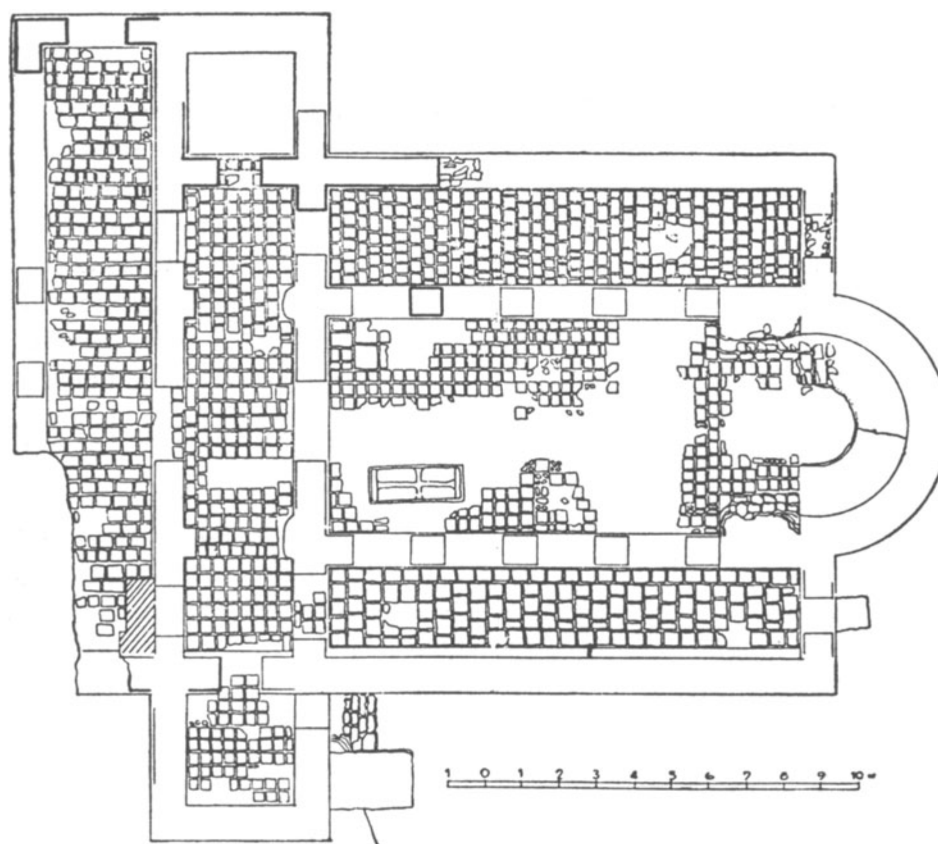


Fig. 144. SOUTH-WEST CHURCH, CARIČIN GRAD. PLAN

Mano-Zisi dates this church to the period of Justinian (527–65) and it is difficult to be more precise than this.

29. THE SOUTH CHURCH, CARIČIN GRAD (Pls. 59–61)

The South Church lies within the southern extension of the city walls of Caričin Grad. It is a T-transept basilica and has a single protruding apse that is three-sided on the outside and horseshoe-shaped inside, a nave and two aisles, a narthex, and an atrium. From the north and south sides of the last jut two chambers, the northern possessing an eastern apse, corresponding to the wings of the nave transept. It is likely to have had galleries above the narthex and aisles and, in all probability, a timber roof, with, perhaps, clerestory lighting. The whole length is 45 metres and the width of the nave and aisles together is 20 metres.[1]

[1] G. Mano-Zisi, 'The Excavations of Caričin Grad, 1949–52', *Starinar*, 1952–53, pp. 127–54 (Serbian).

The walls consist of alternate layers of brick and stone built upon foundations of carefully fitted stone blocks. Brick arcades rested upon the columns, which, spaced unevenly, divided the nave from the aisles. These columns ran uninterruptedly from the two pilastered or cruciform piers flanking the tribelon to the eastern wall of the church, the last ones on each side standing within the area of the transept and sanctuary. Presbytery seats were placed around the apse and four bases of ciborium pillars situated immediately in front of them indicate the position of the altar. Arched openings connected the wings of the transept with the main body of the church. There are signs of marble slabs having been used as skirting in both transept wings and in the apse.

Crumbling remnants of painted plaster show that the walls of the aisles and of the transept wings were originally decorated with wall paintings. The presence of large numbers of tesserae in the nave and the porticoes of the atrium indicate, however, that wall mosaics were used in the more important parts of the church.

Fortunately much of the original floor, including

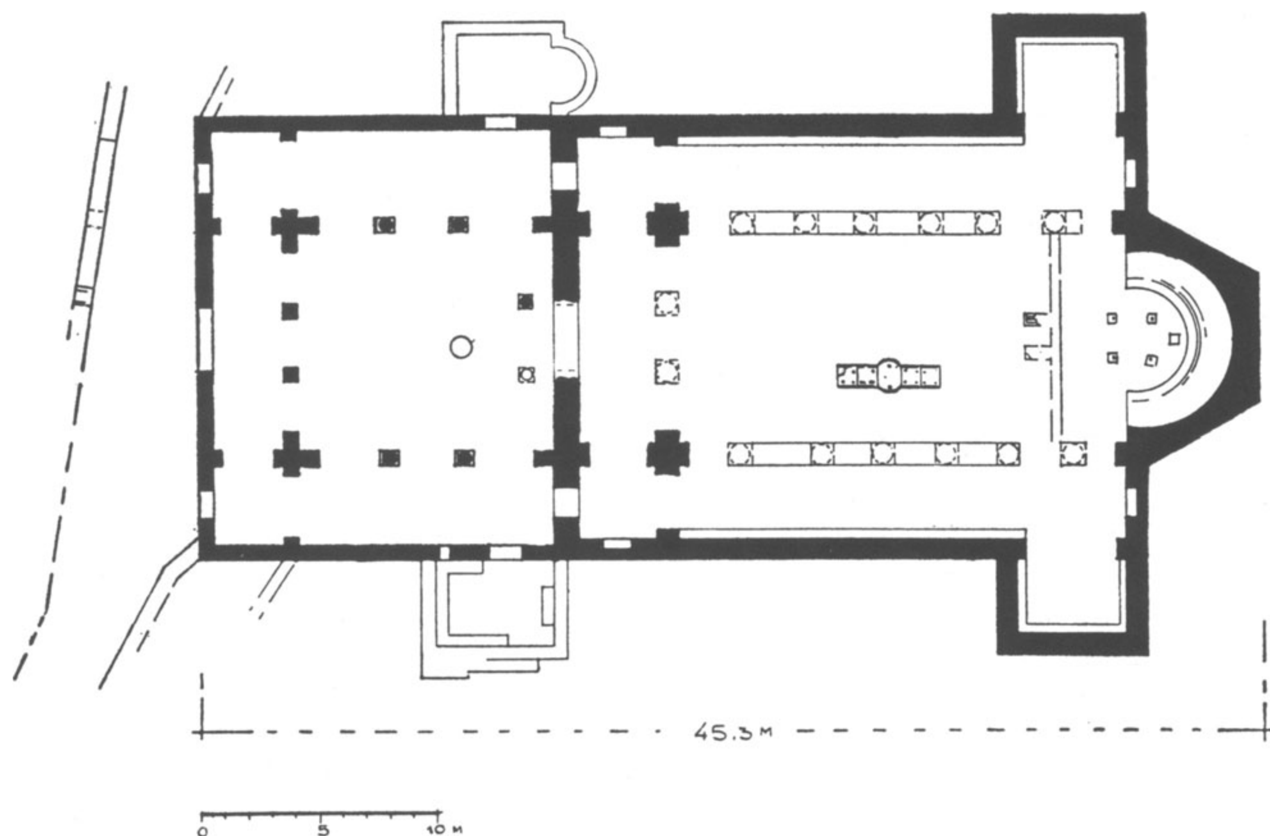


Fig. 145. SOUTH CHURCH, CARIČIN GRAD. PLAN

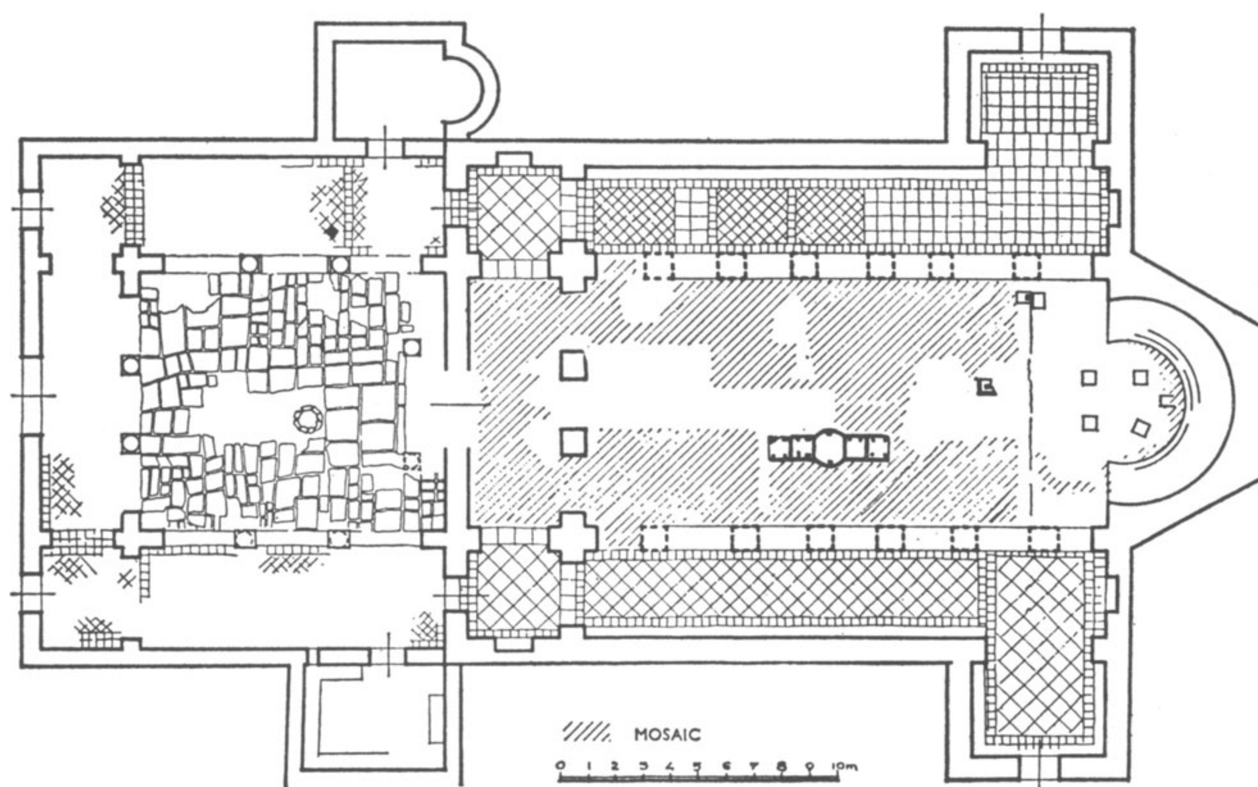


Fig. 146. SOUTH CHURCH, CARIČIN GRAD. Plan showing paved and mosaic areas of the floor

large areas of mosaic, has survived almost intact, and, apart from the great intrinsic interest of the designs, this has been a considerable help in elucidating the liturgical planning of the church. The flooring material of the aisles, the transept wings, and the lateral compartments of the narthex was brick, for the most part laid in a simple diagonal pattern within a border that ran parallel to the walls.

The central area of the church — the narthex, the nave and the bema — possessed a mosaic floor, the patterns of which took account of the importance and function of each part. The tesserae display a considerable variety. Materials used included stone of various kinds and colours, brick, ceramic, glass and enamel. The colours included reds, blues, greens, yellows, ochre, browns and black, as well as white, which was generally used to form the ground for the design. The objects and figures portrayed were executed in finer and smaller tesserae than the rest and particular care was given to the modelling of human faces and animal heads. In such cases both shading and contrast line techniques were employed.

The narthex floor (Pl. 59) was originally a single composition, but the southern end evidently required replacing at some later date. As the design is upright when looked at from south to north, it would seem that either the usual entrance to the church from the atrium was through the southern door of the narthex, or those taking part in the Eucharistic service entered the nave from the south aisle by passing through the southern chamber of the narthex. Basically, the design consists of an interlacing motif providing alternate rows of circles and concave octagons. Within the circles birds of different kinds are portrayed freely and realistically. In the octagons are various kinds of vessels, especially chalices and goblets, and dishes and baskets or sacks of fruit. The incomplete octagons around the edges of the pattern contain leafy branches. The later mosaic at the south end of the narthex is less finely executed. A diagonal pattern divides it into four triangles, in each of which two birds peck at grapes on vine branches issuing from a large amphora.

The whole area of the floor of the nave from the tribelon as far as the entrance into the sanctuary through the chancel screen has been treated as a single composition, the liturgical message of which is presented to the worshipper as his eyes travel towards the altar. The whole composition, only interrupted by the ambo, is enclosed within a uniform double border, the outer composed of two winding bands forming a series of circles enclosing designs of crosses, the inner a spiralling 'wave' pattern similar to the ones found in the floors of many other early Byzantine buildings, including the 'Extra Muros' basilica at Philippi and Caričin Grad's Episcopal Church. It may be noted that in both the Caričin Grad examples the spiralling is characterised by the same degree of emphasis that appears in the Ionic-impost capitals.

The whole composition was divided into two nearly equal parts by a broad strip, which extended, in the fashion of a runner carpet, from the central opening of the tribelon to the entrance of the chancel screen. The middle part of this strip carries a formal geometrical pattern formed from arcs of circles which is almost identical with the floor decoration of the southern arm of the Episcopal Church Baptistery and also occurs in the Trefoil Church south of the city. On either side of this are narrower strips composed of a double Meander pattern combined with oblong fields in which appear birds, chalices, pumpkins, pomegranates and other symbolical objects. Unfortunately, a considerable part of this central strip has been lost.

Both the themes and the arrangement of them are different in the two divisions of the nave separated by the central strip. On the south side, the first zone, which extends as far as the western extremity of the ambo, consists of a series of squares. In these an abstract design, uniform in each case, alternates with a formal four-leafed cross (on a larger scale but basically similar to the pattern of the tribelon zone), a cup, a bird, probably a duck or goose, and a sack or basket. These are arranged in such a manner as to present a diagonal row of each subject to a person proceeding from the tribelon along the central mosaic strip. To the south of the ambo, which stood just out of but alongside the central strip, are three smaller zones. The westernmost is a purely geometrical pattern of squares joined by diagonally inclining lines at their corners. The middle zone is quite narrow and consists of a double row of formalised water lilies or lotus flowers.

The last of these three small compositions extends



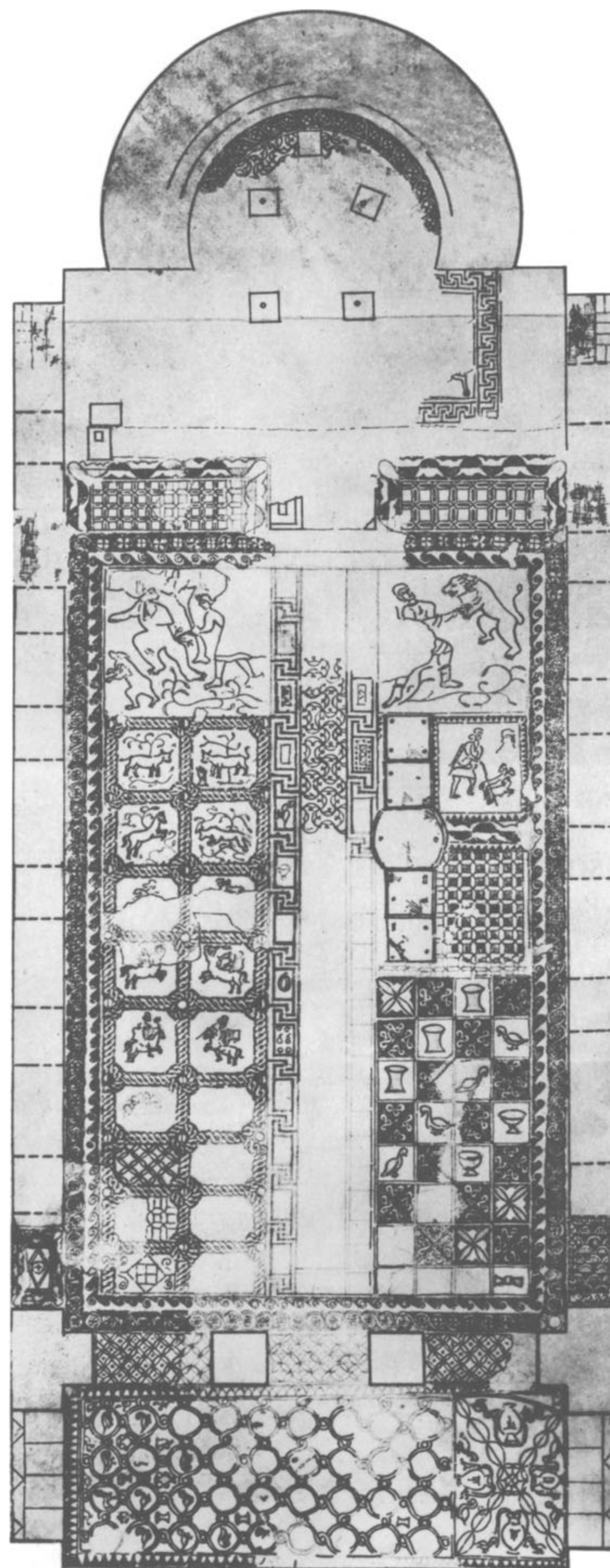
a. Capital from the atrium



b. Capital from the tribelon



c. Capital from the nave colonnades



d. The remnants of the mosaic floor of the sanctuary, nave and narthex. (Drawing by M. Nikolić)

a. The Hunter with the lion

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DETAILS OF THE MOSAIC FLOOR IN THE NAVE

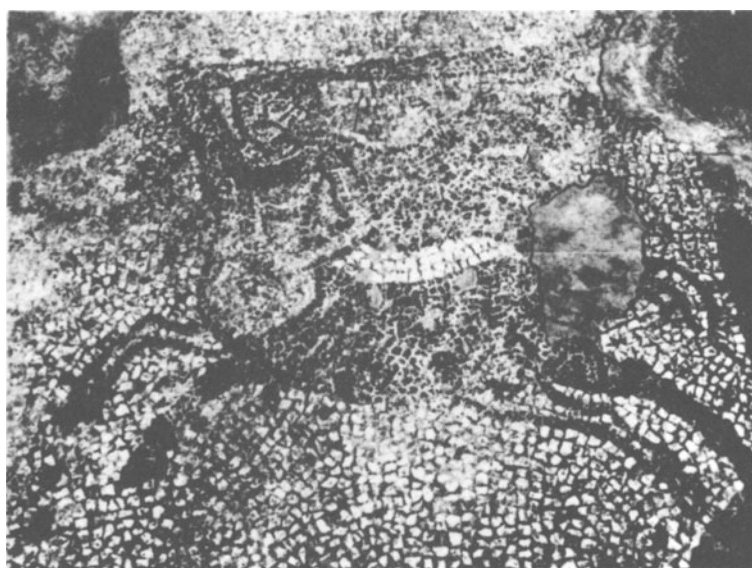
b. The Hunter with the bears



a. Nave mosaic detail; the Good Shepherd



b. Nave mosaic detail; Amazon



c. Nave mosaic detail; Centaur



a. View westwards from the episcopal throne

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b. View south-eastwards from the narthex. On the left is the episcopal throne



as far as the eastern end of the ambo. It has a simple border and is nearly square in shape. Its subject is the Good Shepherd, represented as a simple peasant, leaning on his staff as he follows his sheep. He has no halo, is hatless and wears a sleeveless tunic with a rough and hairy cloak over his left shoulder, leggings and sandals that are reminiscent of the 'opanci' worn by Serbian peasants to-day.

Situated beside the ambo from which the words of Christ were preached and read, there can be no doubt that it is the Good Shepherd Himself who is being portrayed. Yet, in subject and form, it is unusual, possibly unique, in a church of the sixth century. The Good Shepherd was an essentially Early Christian subject. The Orpheus and the bucolic types had both achieved wide popularity, but, with the transmutation of the theme into the resplendent, dignified and princely figure portrayed in the chapel of Galla Placidia in Ravenna (*circa* 450), it had given way to such other christological aspects as the Christ of Salvation and of the Logos, and to the Child with the Virgin. In its portrayal of Christ, the South Church mosaic recalls the Good Shepherd on the floor of the cathedral at Aquileia (*circa* 314–20), and its antique nature is further emphasised by the Hellenistic heroon or pavilion in the top right-hand corner.

Before considering the last composition of the south section of the nave we should look at the design north of the central strip which corresponds to the zones described above. Unlike the southern side this is a unified composition, divided into nine pairs of fields by a thick 'twisted rope' border, 'knotted' in circles at its intersections. The first three pairs of fields, and possibly the fourth, which is missing, contain geometrical designs. The fifth pair contains two mounted Amazons, the sixth two centaurs. They are portrayed in a realistic and lively manner, the horses galloping, the chlamys in which the figures are clothed flying in the wind. One of the Amazons flourishes a battle-axe, the other a spear. The right-hand centaur brandishes a staff above his head; the upper part of the one on the left is unfortunately damaged. Little remains of the seventh pair of fields. Mano-Zisi suggests that hunters or warriors were represented since in each case there were figures which appear to have been pictured in the act of drawing a bow. The last two pairs all show animals at large against a background of vine branches. A galloping or prancing horse and—probably—a lioness in the act of springing appear in the eighth pair, and a bull and cow walk slowly among the vines in the ninth.

The large, square zones which terminate both the north and south sides of the nave are complementary. Situated immediately in front of the bema, they are clearly the culminating motifs of the nave mosaics. To the south a hunter is seen spearing a lion as it springs towards him, its tail upraised, its jaws open and roaring with anger and pain as the hunter thrusts his spear into its heart and causes the blood to gush. That the scene takes place in the open and not in a stadium is shown by the vine branches scattered around. The composition to the north shows a hunter in pursuit of a wounded bear, which he is spearing in its flank. A young bear, also wounded, is shown fleeing in the foreground. Again, scattered vine branches indicate the open spaces and a wood is signified by a tree in the background.

Mano-Zisi, who excavated this church, writes:

> In these two, the most important compositions, one should point out the excellent knowledge and observation of nature, the movements of the animals and people when fighting and a tendency to give character to the human face. Both hunters stand in different attitudes and have different gestures and features. The lion hunter is shown three quarter face, he has wide open eyes, is bearded and has tousled hair. The bear hunter appears in profile. He has thick and firmly closed lips, a protruding jaw, raised and knitted eyebrows and long hair. The lifelike portrayal of character in the deeply lined face and in the wild look of the eyes is achieved with small tesserae. The execution of this strong barbarian figure shows the high artistic quality of the mosaicist employed to decorate the floor of this church. The costume of the hunters, with their tunics fastened with a belt, with their 'opanci' — like sandals and lacings—remind us of those *venatores*, (fighters of wild beasts in arenas,) who were represented in large numbers in the mosaics and consular diptychs in the fifth and sixth centuries.

The entire nave composition terminated at the chancel opening which was in line with the beginning of the transept zone. The chancel opening, as was customary, protruded slightly, leaving two small oblong spaces on either side of the entrance between the

ending of the floor of the nave and the chancel screen. These spaces were decorated with geometrical designs, each slightly different but following a pattern basically similar to the geometric zone south of the ambo. Both were bordered on the east, north and west sides by the same lotus or water lily pattern as that by the ambo.

Unhappily, very little of the flooring of the bema has survived. A small piece of double Meander border remains at the southern end, and in the south-west corner a single hind leg of a lamb or a deer is our solitary and inadequate clue to the subject of the composition. Within the apse, a border similar to the outer border in the nave encloses the vestiges of a mosaic pattern which is clearly the same as the central strip leading from the tribelon to the chancel opening.

Apart from the mosaic floor, the only decorative work to survive from the South Church is represented by a number of sculptured Ionic-impost capitals from the nave and atrium. These are generally similar to those from the atria of the Episcopal Church and the Crypt Church. Such differences as exist occur only in details of decoration. The capitals of the South Church tend towards more varied ornamentation, executed upon all four faces, and beneath the spirals there is a broader space devoid of carving. Commenting that on several of the capitals of the South Church the cross is the central motif of the impost, Nikolajević-Stojković writes

> in one case it is replaced by a medallion, within which is engraved a monogram, and in another a rosette occupies the place of the monogram. The capital with the monogram, which is read as IUSTINIANUS, is on the right-hand column of the tribelon, while the rosette appears on the left-hand column. If the monogram designates the founder, as was the custom of the period, one might have expected to find Theodora's monogram instead of the rosette, as was the case in other churches founded by Justinian.
>
> The omission of the empress's monogram suggests that when the church was built, or rather when its ornament was carved, Theodora was no longer alive. Consequently a rosette was carved as a pendant to Justinian's monogram on the second capital of the tribelon. The rosette corresponds exactly to the dimensions of the monogram as well as to its position on the capital.
>
> If this is the explanation for the omission of Theodora's monogram the decoration of the South Basilica belongs to between 548 and 565.[1]

This dating receives support from the church's situation in the southern extension of the city. It is, of course, possible that such a large and splendidly decorated church might have been built in what was originally a suburb or deserted terrain, but in this event it would almost certainly have been a cemetery church. One, in all probability, already existed within the city walls to serve the leading ecclesiastical authorities — the Crypt Church, and there are no signs of the South Church being used for burial purposes. It is, therefore, reasonable to assume that the South Church, built sometime *circa* 548–65, is some two or three decades later than the Episcopal and Crypt Churches.

The South Church, with its Anatolian apse and twin western chambers projecting north and south of the western end of the atrium, and its Hellenistic tribelon, narthex and galleries, combines to an unusual degree a number of divergent eastern and western forms. A parallel, the date of which is uncertain but may be approximately contemporary, can be found in Church No. 32 at Bin Bir Kilisse (Fig. 147). Although this example lacks the Hellenistic attributes of a tribelon and atrium, Gertrude Bell emphasises that it

> differs in most points from all other basilicas or barn churches (of the Kara Dagh). The narthex does not belong to the Hilani type ; there is no central open portico, but, instead, three doorways of almost equal importance which have been provided with doors. A slight recollection of the usual plan is, however, maintained in the walling off of the southern chamber. This narthex does not, like all the other examples, fall into line with the north and south walls of the body of the church, but is prolonged on either side by a chamber which projects beyond the outer wall of the aisles. In the central part of the upper storey, instead of the wall that cuts off the similar chambers of Nos. 1 and 31 from the nave, there are indications which point with complete certainty to an arched opening ; moreover, leading out of the upper storey of the narthex there were tribunes (galleries) that flanked the nave. The open arcades of these tribunes afforded a view of the nave from

[1] I. Nikolajević-Stojković, *Early Byzantine Decorative Architectural Sculpture in Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro*, pp. 53, 92 (Belgrade, 1957) (Serbian with French summary) (trans.).

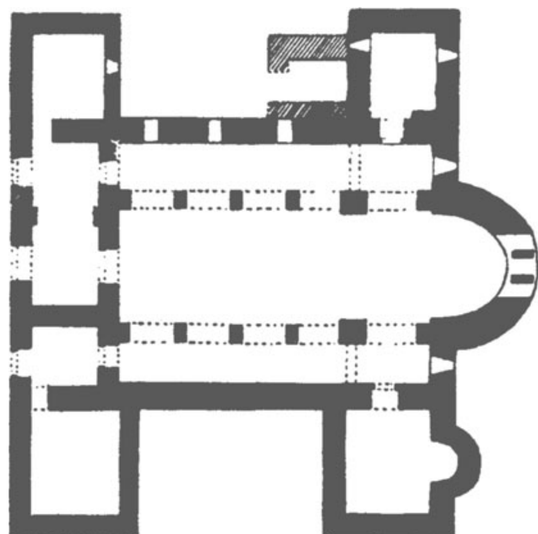


Fig. 147. CHURCH NO. 32, BIN BIR KILISSE, ANATOLIA. PLAN

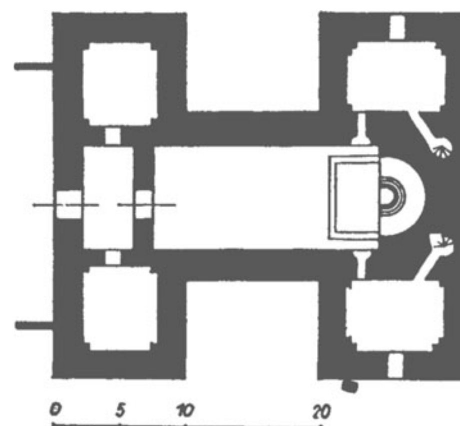


Fig. 148. CHURCH AT DŽANAVAR TEPE, BULGARIA. PLAN

either side ; the nave and presbyterium could be fully seen from the tribune of the narthex.[1]

These two provincial churches, and another similarly planned at Džanavar Tepe, near Varna, in Bulgaria (Fig. 148), situated far from each other, are a fascinating study of independent and widely separated attempts to synthesise the Hellenistic and Anatolian forms of basilica. Each reached a solution that, however unsatisfactory and ephemeral, was almost identical. In consequence, they are key witnesses to an important transitional stage in the social history as well as the ecclesiastical architecture of the lands in which they were built.

We have seen that the majority of the various sixth-century churches of the countryside around Caričin Grad, both basilical and cruciform, derive from Anatolian models and show very little trace of the influence of Hellenism. In the city itself the situation is different. The Episcopal Church, with its structurally defined parabemata, follows a thoroughly Oriental plan, but one that is, in fact, far more a Syrian, Cilician or Isaurian, than an Anatolian type. Thus it is distinguished by — for the sixth-century Balkans — an unusually strongly defined tripartite sanctuary. To explain this we must remember that not only had the Gothic wars, the Hun invasions, the Avar and Slav raids of the previous decades thrust back the once supreme authority of Thessalonica until it extended little farther than the neighbourhood of its own walls, but that Caričin Grad, a foundation of Justinian himself, depended entirely upon Constantinople. In such circumstances, it is hardly surprising that its Episcopal Church should conform to those 'advanced' ideas of Christian worship which had pervaded the capital from the see of Antioch, even though these same ideas had not yet been accepted by the conservative peasantry of nearer, but less accessible, eastern Anatolia.

Despite this, the South Church, built some two or three decades later, appears to indicate a reaction against what might be termed the 'ultra high church' and modern ecclesiastical attitudes of the capital. It is most unlikely that a numerically strong Syrian element existed among the population of Caričin Grad. There had been an organised settlement of Anatolian troops and their families, and perhaps peasant farmers and miners. Mingling with these newcomers were probably numbers of Slavs, content to follow agricultural pursuits under conditions of firmly established law and order, or even to enlist as soldiers. Commerce must have been upon a small scale. Fighting, agriculture and mining were the main industries. Except for the leading administrative and ecclesiastical positions, there was little to attract the Syrian immigrant.

This, we suggest, is the social context of the South Church, with its curious blending of Hellenistic and Anatolian architectural elements. Neither of the parabemata in the transept wings appears to have been intended to serve as a prothesis chamber, although both may jointly have fulfilled the purpose of a diaconicon. The southern wing of the atrium may have acted as an entrance portico. The apsed north wing of the atrium

[1] W. Ramsay and G. L. Bell, *The Thousand and One Churches* (London, 1909), p. 320.

is the most likely place for the congregation to make their oblations as they entered the church, and this view is supported by the existence of the tribelon and the processional path leading from it to the altar.

Probably the nave itself was only used by the clergy and the lay worshippers taking part in the service of the Holy Eucharist and at the appropriate times, curtains were drawn in front of the aisles and galleries, as had occurred in churches of the two previous centuries. Symbols of the Eucharistic ceremony form the motifs of the floor of the narthex. This theme appears again to the right of the tribelon in the nave. It is more difficult to penetrate the obscurity of the symbols in the large zone north of the central strip, particularly in the absence of the wall mosaics. Did the Amazons and the centaurs represent the beliefs of ancient paganism? That the pagan philosophies were still widely followed in the fifth century we know from the collection of writings left by John of Stobi (Joannes Stobaeus). How are we to interpret the animals in the last two pairs of fields? One thing is certain; they possessed some clear meaning for the sixth-century worshipper.

With due reservations, perhaps the two final scenes of the nave mosaic are easier to comprehend, and they may provide a clue to the others. Such scenes of men fighting wild beasts are not uncommon in the art of the period, and they occur frequently upon consular diptychs. On the latter, however, the fight usually takes place in the arena and the scene is intended to imply the munificence of the newly appointed consul in the matter of providing free games and entertainment for the populace. This motive is non-existent in the South Church, where the fights clearly take place in the open country or forest. In view of their position in front of the sanctuary, they surely can only represent the Christian's victorious, divinely assisted fight against the forces of evil.

Can we go deeper than this into the significance of these two compositions? The lion was not only considered the most savage and feared of wild beasts, it was one of the most important of all Mithraic symbols, and central Illyricum had been one of Mithraism's most deeply entrenched strongholds.

Whilst the lion had been a frequent subject for representation in Christian and pre-Christian art, both religious and secular, this was not the case with the bear. Yet in Caričin Grad we do not need to go far to find a topical reason for placing the bear on a par with the lion as a symbol of the evils which the Christian must and, with the aid of his Faith, could overcome. The bear was the Slavs' dreaded Lord of the Woods, the chief manifestation of the wicked and malevolent spirits, against which guard had unceasingly to be kept, and to which propitiating sacrifices had continually to be made. Five centuries later, we still find the bear appearing in Slav church art, in the Svjataja Sofija cathedral of Kiev.

If this interpretation of the mosaics is correct, and the suggested themes of both compositions support each other, the South Church is indeed an eloquent witness, both to the hold still exerted by Mithraism in the central Balkans in the mid-sixth century, and to the degree to which the Slavs had already begun to settle peacefully within the empire and become converted to Christianity. Moreover, in this context the resuscitation of the Good Shepherd theme in its realistic Early Christian form becomes completely understandable, as do the various symbols of cattle and horses. The Slavs were a pastoral people. Their way of life and their religion were fundamental products of their centuries-old agricultural existence; one of their principal deities was the God of Flocks. The floor mosaic of the South Church may prove to be illuminating evidence that, had the Byzantine emperors been able to achieve more peaceful conditions on their eastern frontiers during the sixth and seventh centuries and consequently given more attention to the Slav intrusion, Justinian's vast expenditure on Balkan fortifications might well have proved a sound investment.

30. THE DOMED CHURCH AT KONJUH (Pls. 62–64)

The present-day village of Konjuh lies alongside the Kriva river, twenty kilometres east of Kumanovo. In Roman and early Byzantine times it was a station on the road from Scupi (Skopje) to Pautalia (Kustendil) and Sardica (Sofia). Fragments from old buildings, broken pottery and glass litter an area of three to four square kilometres, and inscriptions recovered indi-

cate a period of more or less continuous settlement from the third century A.D. to the end of the fourteenth. Probably during or around the eleventh century, caves in a rocky hill above Konjuh, the Golemo Gradište, were inhabited by hermits. In spite of its one-time size and apparent importance it has not yet been possible to identify Konjuh with any known early Byzantine site, although a likely possibility exists that it was a Roman highway foundation called Ad Aquas. The inscriptions show that it was inhabited by a Latin-speaking population although to the south Greek was everywhere the dominant tongue. The resultant confusion is graphically illustrated by the mixture of Greek and Latin lettering in Figure 151.

Sculptural fragments and other broken oddments are not all that the twentieth-century passer-by has been able to trace above the soil. Radojčić reports that the outlines of a large basilica can be clearly distinguished, the interior decoration of which seems to have been of white marble.[1] Unfortunately, as yet, we know no more of this basilica than this brief and tantalising comment, for it still awaits excavation.

Even this would have remained beyond the limit of our knowledge of early Byzantine Konjuh but for a strange occurrence that, repeated on another occasion at Suvodol, was responsible for the first excavation of the basilica there. An old man of the nearby village of Šopski Rudar persistently related being told in a dream about a church beneath the soil on a little hill in Konjuh. Eventually he collected a few old people from Konjuh, others from the local monastery of Belya Kovča, and persuaded them to help him dig up the site indicated in his dream. Their unsupervised archaeological methods were crude but successful. Indeed, they discovered the remains of a hitherto unknown church of quite unusual, one might even say, unique character.

This happened in 1919. However, eighteen years passed before the outside world stumbled, quite accidentally, upon the peasants' discovery. In 1937 Professor Vulić arrived at Konjuh in the course of his researches into early inscriptions and seeing, to his surprise, an undocumented, excavated church, communicated the news to Professor Radojčić. Although unable yet to carry out further excavations of the site, Radojčić has, nevertheless, provided an invaluable preliminary study of all the available evidence on the spot that has added considerably to our knowledge of sixth-century Balkan architecture.[2]

The ground plan of the church at Konjuh shows a rhomboid-shaped structure with a short rectangular apse protruding 2 metres from its eastern wall. 23 metres long from the western wall to that of the apse, it is 17·50 metres wide at its western end and 14 at its eastern. The main interior features fall into four main divisions; the apse, holding the episcopal throne, behind which ran a semi-blind ambulatory corridor; the bema and parabemata; a horseshoe-shaped ambulatory or aisle terminating at the two parabemata and enclosing a domed circular nave divided from the bema by a chancel screen; a narthex with two side chambers. The walls, both exterior and interior, the piers and the pillars were stone; the arches, vaults and dome were brick; the roof was tiled. The eastern wall, except the apse, was appreciably thinner than the others, but eastern continuations of the north and south walls, as yet unexcavated, have been traced.

Although rectangular on the outside, where it was 5·50 metres wide, the interior of the apse was semicircular. Within it, a second massive stone construction, also semicircular, incorporated the episcopal throne and the three steps by which it was ascended. Between this construction and the inner wall of the apse was a concentric corridor, open to the bema at its southern end, but closed by a wall to the north.

The bema stretched westwards from the chord of the apse to two particularly massive piers. From these, arches sprung north and south to the outer walls, marking the western limits of the parabemata, and westwards to the arcade enclosing the central, domed nave. Unlike the rest of the church, which was floored with brick, the bema was paved with stone slabs. Presbytery seats were ranged north and south of the apse and spaces between these and the great piers gave access to the parabemata. A chancel screen crossed the 4·50 metres gap between the two piers with an entrance protruding into the nave in its centre.

The east walls of both parabemata were uniformly straight. Both had doorways in their north or south exterior walls, but the northern door was of later

[1 & 2] S. Radojčić, 'The Church of Konjuh', *Zbornik Radova* (Byzantine Institute, vol. 1), (Belgrade, 1952), pp. 148-67 (Serbian).

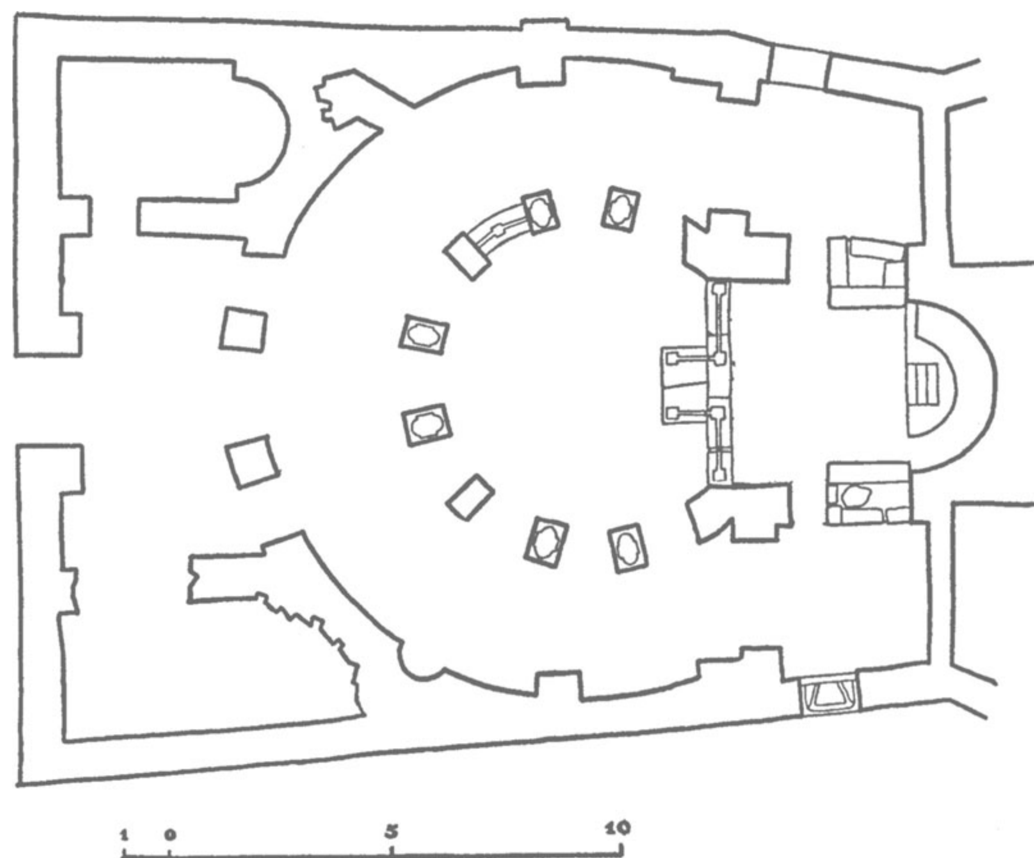


Fig. 149. DOMED CHURCH AT KONJUH. PLAN

construction than its wall. The flooring of the parabemata has not been preserved.

The central part of the church consisted of a horseshoe-shaped ambulatory or aisle and a central, domed nave, which, except where the chancel screen divided it from the bema, was circular. 7·50 metres in diameter, the nave was separated from the aisle by a colonnade consisting of four masonry piers and six monolithic double pillars. The two massive piers of the western corners of the bema were diagonally opposed by two smaller, simple ones; the double pillars were placed in pairs in the intervening spaces. Five entrances opened from the aisle into the nave, two between the eastern piers and the two easternmost pillars, and three between the two westernmost pillars and the piers to either side of them. The four remaining gaps to the north and to the south were closed by low walls upon which rested stone parapet slabs (Fig. 150). Somewhere within the nave stood an ambo.

The intercolumniations of the colonnade varied from 1·06 metres to 1·26 metres. Considerable irregularity also occurred in the dimensions of the bases of the pillars and, to a lesser extent, in the capitals. The double columns, like the piers, were placed radially. The capitals, four of which have been found, are of the impost type and crudely executed. Two carry

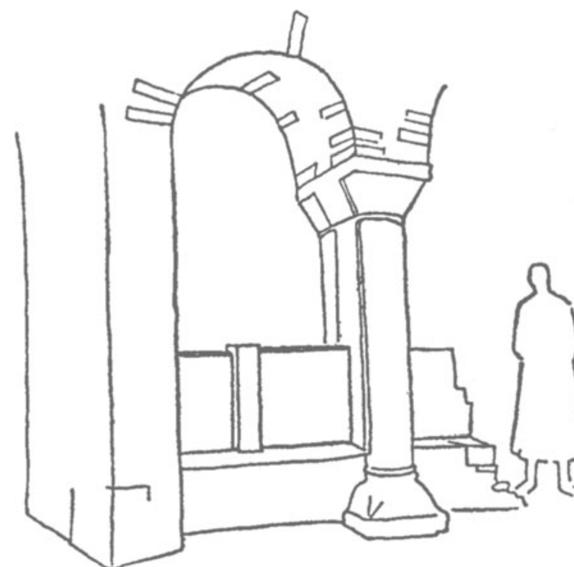


Fig. 150. DOMED CHURCH AT KONJUH. Piers, double columns and parapet between the nave and aisle. (Reconstruction by Radojčić)

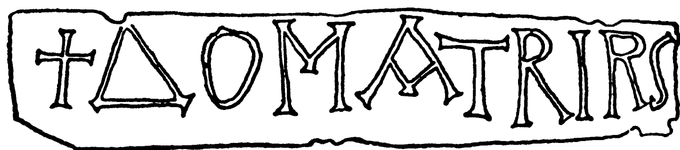


Fig. 151. DOMED CHURCH AT KONJUH.
Inscription 'DOMATRIRS'

a simple acanthus design. In the third a hen-like bird appears between two acanthus leaves, and above this, preceded by a cross, is the inscription 'DOMATRIRS' (Fig. 151). The fourth capital is slightly smaller and more skilfully carved; its decoration is a jewelled cross (Pl. 63).

The horseshoe-shaped aisle, terminating to the east in the two parabemata, was 3 metres wide. In its north-western part a narrow doorway opened on to an interior staircase leading to an upper storey. A semicircular niche occupied a corresponding position to the south-west. The circumscribing wall was apparently decorated with paintings, for, east of the doorway to the staircase, fragments of plaster have survived showing painted imitations of marble facing.

Corresponding to the triple opening into the nave, a tribelon formed by two massive piers connected the aisle with the narthex. The latter, 7·50 metres from north to south and about 3·50 from east to west, had a single western entrance, 2·20 metres across. North and south of the narthex, however, and inscribed within the limits of the church's exterior walls, were two side chambers. The southern of these has been for the most part demolished, but its irregular shape appears more or less to follow the lines of the exterior wall and the curve of the aisle against which it lay. The northern chamber, on the other hand, had a clearly defined eastern apse. Both chambers could be entered only from the narthex and had no direct access to the ambulatory.

The last point is of particular importance in establishing the relationship of the Konjuh church to other contemporary structures. In the liturgical arrangement of its western part Konjuh differs only from the church at Rujkovac near Caričin Grad in that its entry from the narthex into the nave was through a tribelon, a feature which did, however, appear in the South Church of Caričin Grad, although, in the last named, the side chambers adjoined the atrium. The fact that the side chambers were inscribed at Konjuh is of architectural but not of liturgical importance. It must not be allowed to confuse Konjuh with the later Byzantine, domed, cross-in-square church, where the side chambers of the narthex freely open into the aisles, nor with the earlier church of Hosios David in Thessalonica.

While the sculptural ornamentation of the structural parts of the church, that is to say, the moulding of the bases of the pillars and the carving of the capitals, is clearly on a par with the somewhat crude execution of the architecture, the chancel screen and the ambo are not only of different stone, but show exceptionally high artistry and craftsmanship. The impression produced is that the church was constructed by local builders and stone-masons, but the decorative sculpture intended for the more liturgically significant parts was commissioned from a superior workshop.

The screen comprised finely carved stone slabs held between six slender pillars. The latter were square with carved reliefs at their lower parts, where they held the intervening slabs. Above this, they were rounded, and carried simple acanthus capitals and an architrave, from which probably hung curtains.

A substantial fragment of the lower part of the southern pillar at the entrance of the chancel screen has been found. It has relief carvings on the western and southern faces. On the latter is an acanthus motif. A single stylised stem, from which leaves sprout gracefully and naturally, spirals freely from bottom to top. On the western face of the pillar a series of connected circles of vine tendrils enclose vine leaves and bunches of grapes. Birds, perched here and there on the tendrils, peck at the grapes in a manner not unlike those on a fragment of a chancel pillar from Thebes or on the end-sixth century Ravenna sarcophagus of Archbishop Theodore, although in both these cases the leaves are presented in an altogether different manner and the carving shows a more plastic approach (Pl. 63, Fig. 152).

The upper parts of the chancel pillars, rounded to a diameter of approximately 0·20 metres, possess no other decoration than simply carved rings at intervals which it is not possible to conjecture. The small capitals carrying the architrave have a triple acanthus motif at each corner and on their faces, a 'V' line rising from the base and ending in reliefs of spiralling volutes



Fig. 152. FRAGMENT OF A CHANCEL SCREEN PILLAR FOUND AT THEBES

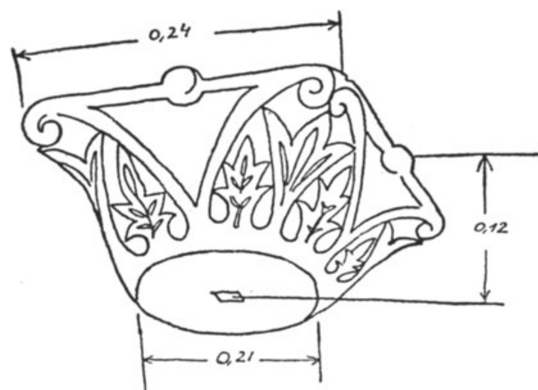


Fig. 153. DOMED CHURCH AT KONJUH. Chancel screen capital. (Reconstruction by Radojčić)

(Fig. 153). No fragments have been identified as belonging to the architrave.

On the evidence of the fragments unearthed by the peasants during their excavation, and which are now exhibited in the Kuršumli-Han Museum in Skopje, Radojčić has classified the slabs carved with reliefs into three categories. The first, decorated on one side only, bears reliefs of animals. These slabs, considered to be from the parapet separating the nave from the ambulatory aisle, have either a plain, flat border, or one consisting of a single, ornamental zone containing a flowing, stylised acanthus in similar vein to that on the southern face of the chancel pier. Animals portrayed on these slabs include a horse, a bear, a bull and a snake or dragon (Pl. 64). Possibly the galleries also had parapets of a similar type.

The second group, all of which appear to originate from the chancel screen, are carved on both sides. On the inner, or sanctuary side, are various forms of crosses within circles or rectangles. The outer face is more richly carved with triple zones of stylised foliate motifs. Unfortunately, no fragment has yet been found to tell us what object or symbol occupied the centre of these slabs (Pl. 64, Fig. 155).

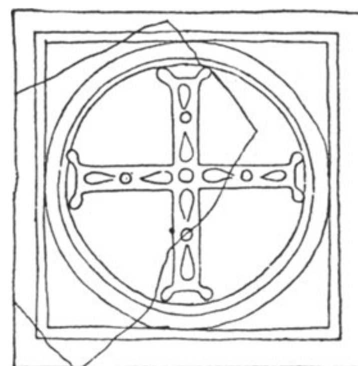


Fig. 154. DOMED CHURCH AT KONJUH. Slab from the entrance to the chancel screen

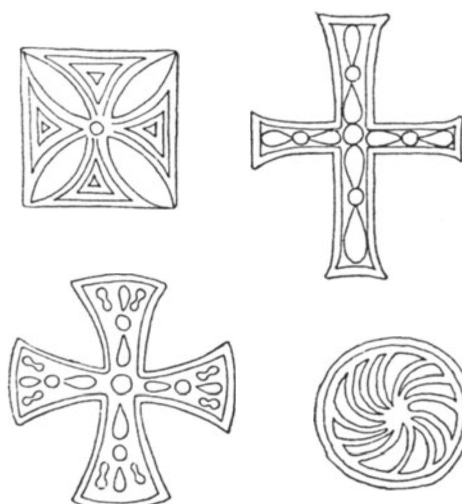


Fig. 155. DOMED CHURCH AT KONJUH. Types of crosses appearing in the sculptural decoration



a. Bema. To the left and right are the bases of the presbytery seats. The episcopal throne is in the centre and to the right of it is the entrance to the semi-circular passage within the apse



b. Capital



c. Capital



d. Capital

e. Detail from the sarcophagus of Archbishop Theodore, S. Apollinare-in-Classe, Ravenna





f.



g.

Fragment of a pillar from the chancel screen showing the decorated sides



a.



b.

SCULPTURED FRAGMENTS

64 DOMED CHURCH AT KONJUH

The third group, the most richly decorated of all, are either flat or semicircular in form and belong to the ambo. They are carved upon one side only with a triple foliate border that, in one case, has preserved its centre-piece. The latter, a finely carved stag standing at bay, a dog leaping at its throat and a stylised tree behind it to symbolise a forest, was a popular contemporary symbol of the Christian pursued by sin and pleasure (Pl. 64*a*).

The same theme, it will be recalled, appeared upon one of the capitals in the Basilica of Bishop Philip. There it was treated with considerably greater realism. In a scene full of life and movement, the stag leapt through the forest with the dogs in hot pursuit. The Konjuh sculptor's approach was quite different, and by his stylisation and restraint he has achieved a dignity that is quite moving. Within its Macedonian context this symbol of the stag at bay has the additional interest in that Christianity has reversed the Heroic Hunter theme of pagan times. The Hero is no longer the hunter, but his quarry. One wonders if the symbol did not also possess overtones reflecting the barbarian successes in their invasions of Byzantine Christendom.

The similar liturgical arrangement of the western parts of Konjuh and of the South Church at Caričin Grad has already been mentioned. Comparison of the ground plans of the two churches reveals a further common element in the siting of the eastern parabemata. No less than the South Church, Konjuh combines the East Anatolian form of a narthex with side chambers, the northern with an eastern apse, the Greek tribelon (appearing twice in view of the fact that the ambulatory aisle separates the narthex from the nave), and the Syrian form of bema and two parabemata.

An aspect of the sculptural decoration of the two churches calling for notice concerns the capitals of the chancel screen at Konjuh and the Ionic-impost capitals of the South Church. The accentuated 'V' line, ending in spiralling relief volutes, is common to both, although one is clearly not a copy of the other. This decorative detail, like that on the Ionic-impost capitals of the Episcopal Church of Caričin Grad, recalls an eastern Anatolian motif.[1]

The animals carved in relief on the intercolumnar slabs separating the nave from the aisle at Konjuh also recall certain of the symbols of the floor mosaic in the nave of the South Church. Their appearance in the same liturgical division of the church cannot but mean that they possessed a similar symbolic meaning. This suggests the local settlement of a peaceful Slav population, already converted to Christianity at the time of the foundation of the Konjuh church, or, at any rate, at the time of the erection of these intercolumnar parapets. These, if at all, could only have been a few years later than the original structure.

In other ways, however, the Konjuh church clearly differs from the South Church and these, taken as a whole, make it unique within our present knowledge. They are its circular domed nave and horseshoe-shaped aisle, the enclosure of both the eastern and the western side chambers within an inscribing wall, and the semi-blind, semicircular corridor behind the episcopal throne in the apse.

A centralised circular or octagonal church roofed with a dome was by no means uncommon in the sixth century. Originally evolved in Asia, the architectural form had been adopted by Rome in pagan times. In the Christian West the round form tended to serve the purpose of a mausoleum or martyrium, as in Sta Costanza, Rome, while the octagon became the popular form for a baptistery as, for instance, in Ravenna. In Thessalonica, Galerius's Rotunda, probably erected to be his mausoleum, was converted into a splendid church towards the end of the fourth century. In Syria the development of this centralised type of church for congregational purposes, as a rule probably in association with the cult of a martyr, appears to have been particularly strong. It was the form of St John the Baptist's at Gerasa, the churches at Beisan and Madaba, of St George at Ezra and the Episcopal Church at Bosra. In the two last, both built during the second decade of the sixth century with parabemata, as was the case at Konjuh, the aisle virtually enclosed the nave. However, the bema and parabemata were appended, rather as annexes; they did not perform a structurally essential task in relation to the rest of the building.

Syrian-influenced S. Vitale in Ravenna, built in the second quarter of the sixth century, shows small progress towards the evolution of an architecturally

[1] W. Ramsay and G. L. Bell, *The Thousand and One Churches* (London, 1909), fig. 29.

co-ordinated tripartite sanctuary and a round or octagonal domed nave. In fact, for all its awkwardness, its Constantinople contemporary, SS. Sergius and Bacchus, achieves greater success through incorporating the parabemata in the angles of its inscribing walls.

In the Balkans the architect at Konjuh faced a more complicated problem than his opposite number of the South Church. However vulnerable in the case of either large-scale invasions or the sudden 'smash and grab' raids of smaller groups of intruders, Konjuh lay some distance behind the main series of fortified positions of which Caričin Grad was one of the key strongpoints. Its proximity to the Greek-speaking area implied the presence locally of Hellenistic influences, but with them were others now coming through and from Syria. Thus, the problem was not only to combine the Anatolian winged narthex with the Hellenistic basilica, to which, by the sixth century in Macedonia, parabemata in one form or another had increasingly become a normal feature, but, in addition, to take account of the new Oriental influences. These, travelling through Constantinople as well as Thessalonica, and reinforced by the presence of Syrian merchants and Cilician and Isaurian settlers, demanded a centralised church with a domed nave. Thus one sees why both pairs of side chambers were inscribed within the nearly rectangular outer walls of the church. Given the component elements of the church he was commissioned to build, it would have been difficult for the architect to have done otherwise.

The semi-blind, semicircular corridor within the apse remains to be explained. Except for the closure at the northern end, this ambulatory recalls the apsidal plan of the crypts of St Demetrius at Thessalonica, the Church of Bishop Philip at Stobi, and, Radojčić cites, SS. Karp and Papil at Constantinople. The inference that the Konjuh church is therefore a martyrium is supported, it has been suggested, by the centralised domed construction of the nave. This, however, cannot be regarded as conclusive evidence. During the sixth century the domed, centralised church replaced the Hellenistic basilica as the appropriate edifice for Christian worship throughout eastern Christendom, and Konjuh illustrates a stage in the transition. Nevertheless, the possibility that sacred relics were interred within the apse, and that Konjuh must also be regarded as an important example of a sixth-century martyrium is not to be discounted. The disposition of the apse does, indeed, make it seem likely, although proof must await the full excavation of the site.

Discussing the carved reliefs at Konjuh, Nikolajević-Stojković remarks:

> The total absence of ornamental motifs which even recall antique forms, the very flat relief of these carvings, and the stylisation of the vegetable motifs, taken altogether bring these sculptures close to those of tenth-eleventh century Macedonia, whilst a comparison with the decorative elements at Stobi also shows a considerable difference in time. The high sanctuary screen, where the lower part of the pillars have lost the 'classic' geometrical moulding and are adorned with stylised vines, with birds and other vegetable ornament, represents the new phase of the decorative evolution of the sanctuary screen and indicates the later part of the age of Justinian. This is confirmed by the decoration of the ambo, which may generally be compared with the sixth century ambos of Ravenna.[1]

Probably built after the completion of Aghia Sophia in Constantinople (563), Konjuh's provincial and semi-exposed situation accounts for its relatively primitive plan.

[1] I. Nikolajević-Stojković, *Early Byzantine Decorative Architectural Sculpture in Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro* (Belgrade, 1957), pp. 49–50, 91 (Serbian with full French summary) (trans.).

Addendum to Chapter X

31. THE ACROPOLIS BASILICA AT BREGOVINA

Excavations begun at Bregovina in 1957 have revealed the site of an Early Byzantine walled town which probably formed a link in the Caričin Grad complex of fortifications. Lying to the north of Caričin Grad, it similarly possessed an inner fortified acropolis, in the north-eastern corner of which the ruins of a church were discovered.

The excavations have shown that the north and east walls of this church, including a semicircular tower at its north-eastern point, served also as the outer walls of the acropolis. In consequence, these walls were considerably thicker and stronger than those of the south and west sides. The church itself was a basilica and consisted of a nave and two aisles, a protruding apse that was semicircular inside and three-sided outside and a narthex divided into three strongly defined sections corresponding to the divisions of the nave and aisles (Fig. 156). At the east end of the northern section of the narthex a rounded apse was found which extended into the aisle, but it is questionable whether this was part of the original structure rather than a much later attempt to construct a humble chapel among the ruins of the basilica. Galleries probably existed above the aisles and possibly also above the narthex.

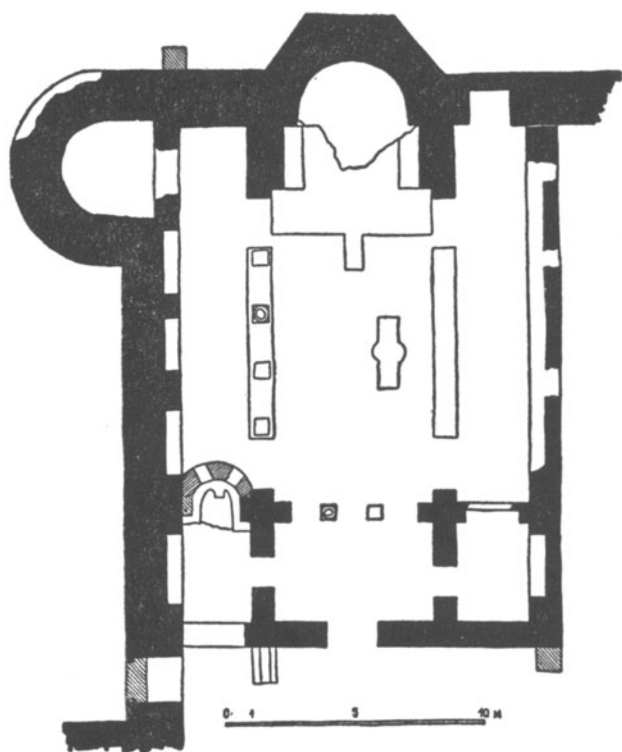


Fig. 156. ACROPOLIS BASILICA, BREGOVINA. PLAN

The nave was entered from the narthex through a tribelon. High brick stylobates, each carrying four columns on bases and intercolumnar parapet slabs, separated it from the aisles leaving openings at both ends. The base of an ambo was found slightly south of its axis. The bema, the level of which was slightly raised above that of the nave, projected almost as far as the eastern ends of the stylobates, its centrally sited entrance extending beyond them. Presbytery seats were ranged opposite each other on the north and south sides; behind them massive walls projected three metres from the apse towards the stylobates.

Glass tesserae scattered about the eastern part of the church indicate that the apse and perhaps the walls of the bema above the presbytery seats were decorated with mosaic. Painted imitations of marble panels were also used on the lower sections of the main walls. Although no examples of sculpture were found on the site, Nikolajević-Stojković reports the presence of several pieces re-used in local houses and in the nearby church of Žitni Potok. These include bases, the shafts of columns, capitals of the Corinthian type decorated with acanthus leaves chiselled in low

relief upon the drum and Ionic-impost capitals.[1] However, whether any or all of these pieces came from the Acropolis Basilica or from another yet to be discovered remains to be determined.

As Stričević observes, the Acropolis Church possesses the characteristic plan and architectural details of the basilicas built in the neighbourhood of Caričin Grad during the reign of Justinian (527–65).[2] Yet, for all their unmistakable stamp of time and place, it is equally typical of these basilicas that they show considerable divergences in liturgical practice. The Acropolis Church, like the basilica at Svinjarica and the South Church at Caričin Grad, possessed a tribelon indicating, as did the shape of its bema, a Greek liturgical influence that was relatively rare in this region of the Balkans at this time. On the other hand, the form of the apse and the emphatically tripartite nature of the narthex stem from eastern Anatolia and reflect the presence of large numbers of Anatolian troops and, doubtless, civilians too. Although the semi-enclosed east ends of the aisles foreshadow the acceptance of the Syro-Mesopotamian tripartite sanctuary, they are still far removed from the fully developed parabemata that appear in the basilica at Ćurline or in the Episcopal Basilica of Caričin Grad.

In the Acropolis Church at Bregovina the northern section of the narthex probably served as the prothesis room. The Offertory Procession would then have passed from there, through the tribelon and down the centre of the nave to the bema. In origin this was the Cappadocian form of service although, having acquired in a Greek environment the additional symbolism of the tribelon, it had been in use in Basilica A at Philippi since the second quarter of the fifth century.

32. TWO BASILICAS AT OHRID

Lychnidus, occupying a strategic position on Lake Lychnitis (Lake Ohrid) and on the ancient trans-Balkan route that, following the Roman conquest of Macedonia in the second century B.C., became the Via Egnatia, enters recorded history as the chief town of an Illyrian tribe, the Dassaretae. After playing a prominent part in the wars between Rome and Macedon, it shared in the growing prosperity of the Via Egnatia as the Roman Empire expanded into Asia. The decline of the highway, the disruption of trade and the insecurity of the second half of the fourth century does not seem to have affected Lychnidus unduly. There is no record of it being endangered by the numerous barbarian invasions of the fourth and fifth centuries until 479, in which year Theodoric the Amal, fresh from the sack of Stobi, unsuccessfully attempted to capture it. Lychnidus did not survive this victory for long. During the reign of Justinian (527–65) severe destruction was caused by an earthquake and Procopius, who records the disaster, does not include Lychnidus in his list of cities reconstructed by Justinian. Nor does any mention of it occur again.

Beyond the fact of the Slav colonisation, the next three centuries are a blank in our knowledge of western Macedonia. Towards the end of the ninth century, Ochrida or Achrida — to-day Ohrid — a Slav town on the north-east shore of the lake, emerges as the principal centre from which St Clement and his followers were disseminating Christianity and Byzantine culture to the Slav population of the region. The identification of the site of Slav Ochrida with that of Hellenistic and Early Byzantine Lychnidus is customarily accepted, but conclusive evidence is so far lacking. On the basis of the early Itineraries, Leake has placed Lychnidus on the east side of the lake near its southern extremity.[3] Close to the monastery of Sveti Naum, this point lies on the present Yugoslav-Albanian frontier; consequently any possibility of its archaeological investigation has to be excluded for the time being.

The recent discovery of the sites of two Early Byzantine churches within the walls of Ochrida has meant, however, that we can now trace the history of Ohrid to the fifth or sixth century. A baptistery annexed to one of them indicates that it was then the

[1] I. Nikolajević-Stojković, *Early Byzantine Decorative Architectural Sculpture in Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro* (Belgrade, 1957), p. 57, Figs. 25, 82 and 146 (Serbian with French summary).

[2] G. Stričević, 'Byzantine Archaeology in Yugoslavia 1955–58', *Akten des XI. Internationalen Byzantinisten-Kongresses, München 1958*, (Munich, 1960) pp. 586–91.

[3] W. M. Leake, *Travels in Northern Greece* (London, 1835), vol. 3, p. 281.

seat of a bishop, as was Lychnidus, which was represented by its bishop at the Council of Sardica in 343. Nevertheless, whether Ochrida was Lychnidus or another prosperous but anonymous settlement on Lake Lychnitis and the Via Egnatia has not been solved by these discoveries.

The Early Byzantine church with the baptistery — a quatrefoil with a mosaic floor — is to be found close to the 'Imaret', some two hundred metres south of the main gate of the citadel. At the time of writing it is in the process of being excavated and a description of it must therefore await its publication.

The second Early Byzantine site is occupied by the eleventh-century church of Sveta Sofija (Holy Wisdom). Archaeological research undertaken in connection with the preservation of this church has shown that its north and south walls rest upon considerably earlier foundations.[1] It has also been responsible for the discovery in the narthex of a brick showing in relief the plan of an Early Byzantine basilica. This possessed a nave and two aisles, a semicircular apse and a narthex with annexed rooms projecting north and south, the former with a northern, the latter with an eastern apse (Fig. 157). This plan closely resembles those of basilicas excavated at nearby Studenčišta and Radolišta (Figs. 158 and 159). Moreover, two bricks bearing identical reliefs have been found in the basilica at Radolišta.[2]

[1] D. Koco, 'Nouvelles Considérations sur l'église Sainte-Sophie à Ohrid', *Archaeologia Iugoslavica 2* (Belgrade, 1956), p. 140.

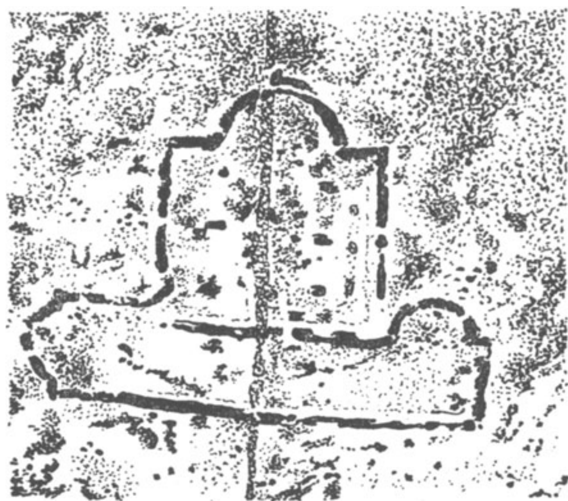


Fig. 157. BRICK SHOWING IN RELIEF THE PLAN OF AN EARLY BYZANTINE BASILICA. From the narthex of Sveta Sofija, Ohrid

Consequently, it appears likely that the foundations of the present church of Sveta Sofija, at least as far as the north and south walls were concerned, originally belonged to an Early Byzantine predecessor built about the same time as Studenčišta and Radolišta (see pages 232-3). It was a large basilica for its plan and dimensions must have been approximately those of Sveta Sofija, the nave and aisles of which are 22 metres long and 15 metres across.

33. THE BASILICAS AT STUDENČIŠTA AND RADOLIŠTA

Two kilometres south of Ohrid, near the village of Studenčišta, excavations have revealed the remains of an Early Byzantine basilica with a baptistery (Fig. 158).[3] The main part of the church comprised a nave and two aisles, their total width greater than their length, a rounded, slightly horseshoe-shaped apse, a narthex and an atrium of which the narthex formed the east side. Stylobates running the full length of the nave separated it from the aisles. There are indications that columns, which have now disappeared, stood upon the stylobates. Three entrances led from the atrium into the narthex and three from the narthex into the nave and aisles, those from the aisles being placed asymmetrically to their counterparts from the atrium. As the walls would not have been strong enough to have supported vaulting, the excavators concluded that the building was roofed with timber in the Hellenistic manner.

The narthex also possessed doorways in its north and south walls. The former opened into a room having a relatively large and strongly defined horseshoe-shaped eastern apse. The latter entered another room with a rounded southern apse and an eastern doorway leading into a square baptistery. This

[2] D. Koco, 'The Church of Sveta Sofija in Ohrid', *Godišen Zbornik na Filozfskiot Fakultet, Skopje*, 1949. (Macedonian.) D. Koco, 'Basiliques paléochrétiennes dans la région du lac d'Ohrid', *Recueil des Travaux, Musée National d'Ohrid*, 1961, p. 17.

[3] V. Lahtov, *Results of excavations of the Early Christian basilica at Studenčišta, Ohrid, 1957*. (Paper given in 1958 to the Archaeological Institute of the Serbian Academy of Sciences) (unpublished).

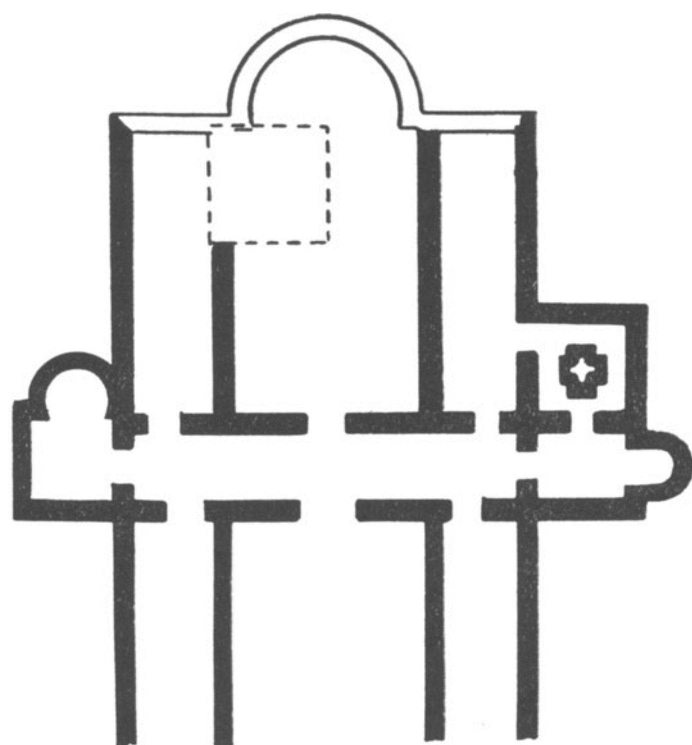


Fig. 158. BASILICA AT STUDENČIŠTA. PLAN

contained a cruciform piscina and had access to the south aisle.

Mosaic was used for the floors of the nave, of which only the western part has been preserved, of the narthex and of the room south of the narthex. The aisles and other subsidiary rooms were paved with brick, although whether this also applied to the baptistery is not specifically stated in the only published description of this church.[1] Koco classifies the mosaics with those of the basilica at Radolišta and comments that they combine interlacings with representations of local flora and Christian symbols commonly found in church art of the fifth century.[2]

A powerful motive must have lain behind the choice of the site at Studenčišta. The squat form of the basilica was dictated by the nature of the terrain and the builders were even obliged to lay the floors of the various parts of the church at different levels. The question arises, too, why a church with a baptistery, with its implication of a bishopric, should have been built so close to Ohrid, which, whether Lychnidus or not, we know to have been a town of some importance with an approximately contemporary church also possessing a baptistery. A spring close by offers a clue to this choice, not so much because it would have been a convenient source of water, but rather for its suggestion of the earlier presence of a pagan temple, either Illyrian or Slav. In this event the building of the church would have been intended to signify the victory of Christianity, particularly in the eyes of those whom it needed to convert. The date of construction is thus an important factor in finding the motive for the building of the Studenčišta basilica, but before discussing this point it will be useful to examine its sister church at Radolišta.

Radolišta lies five kilometres west of Struga. Here, on the outskirts of the village, the ruins have been excavated of an early Byzantine basilica, the plan of which demonstrates a clear relationship to that at Studenčišta.[3] It consisted of a nave and two aisles, a semicircular apse, a narthex and an atrium of which the eastern side served as an exonarthex. From the narthex to the apse the basilica was 25 metres long and the full width across the nave and aisles was 15·20 metres. Internally the nave and aisles measured 6·50 and 2·70 metres in width respectively and were 15·70 metres long, to which the apse added a further 2·60 metres in the case of the nave[4] (Fig. 159). The narthex differed from that at Studenčišta in lacking a central western doorway corresponding to the entrance into the nave. On the other hand it had identically sited doorways in the north and south walls opening into annexed rooms which protruded beyond the walls of the aisles. The northern annex, with a small square eastern apse, extended along the north wall of the exonarthex. The southern annex, a rounded apse on its south side, opened into another room through a doorway in its east wall. This room, like the similarly situated baptistery at Studenčišta, had access into the south aisle and, although no evidence of a

[1] & [2] D. Koco, 'Basiliques paléochrétiennes dans la région du lac d'Ohrid', *Recueil des Travaux, Musée National d'Ohrid, 1961*, p. 20. The dimensions of the basilica are not given in this publication and only one detail of the narthex mosaic is reproduced. The Studenčišta basilica was, however, on an approximately similar scale to that at Radolišta (see below). After the completion of the excavations the mosaics were again covered for the purpose of protection and their definitive publication by the National Museum of Ohrid is awaited.

[3] D. Koco, *op. cit.* pp. 15–33.

[4] I am indebted to Dr. P. Miljković-Pepek for these dimensions.

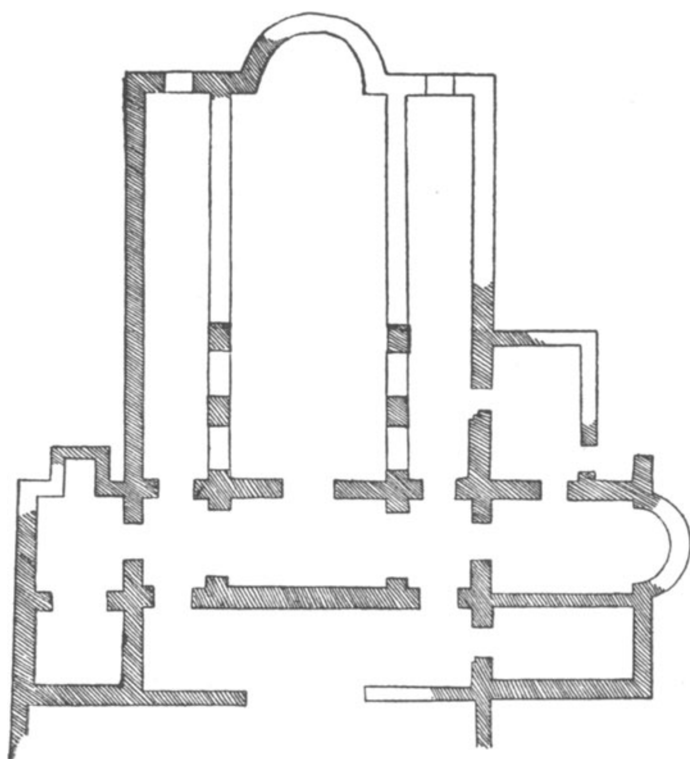


Fig. 159. BASILICA AT RADOLIŠTA. PLAN

piscina has been noted, the possibility that it, too, was a baptistery must be taken into account. An adjoining but separate room west of the apsed room was entered from the exonarthex. The aisles appear to have had doorways at their east ends as well as entrances from the narthex. On the evidence of the thickness of the walls and of the massive masonry piers lining the nave, the excavators considered that this basilica, unlike Studenčišta, possessed a vaulted ceiling.[1]

Mosaic was used for the floors of the narthex and of the nave, only the western part of which has survived (Fig. 160). As far as has been possible to ascertain, elsewhere the church was paved with brick, but circumstances did not permit the complete excavation of the southern annexes.

The mosaic floor of the narthex was divided into five sections. The three larger, corresponding to the nave and aisles, were linked by two small strips occupying the spaces beneath the arches marking the divisions of the narthex. The two outer sections possessed identical borders of plain interlacing. Within these borders the northern section contained a field of joined tetraphyllia similar to the tribelon zone in the South Church at Caričin Grad (Pl. 59*e*), the southern another common pattern formed from arcs of circles. The latter is also to be found in the Trefoil Chapel near Caričin Grad (Fig. 110), in the south apse of the baptistery attached to Caričin Grad's Episcopal Basilica (Pl. 57*b*) and in the central strip of the nave in the South Church (Pl. 59*e*). The middle section of the narthex, that is to say the one which corresponded to and led into the nave, was bordered by a lotus flower pattern. Inside this were eight complete and two incomplete circular medallions containing representations of a pomegranate tree or an animal enclosed in simple interlacing. A plain fish-scale pattern appeared on the two small strips.

The floor mosaic of the nave, the preserved part of which does not extend to the sanctuary, was outlined by a complex interlacing border. Inside this a series of octagonal medallions alternated forwards and sideways with crosses and diagonally with hexagonal lozenges, the narrow interstices being filled with interlacing. The arms of the crosses were decorated with a plain chevron design, but each of the medallions and lozenges contained an animal or a vegetable motif. Among these were eels — the symbol of Struga, fishes, including dolphins and crabs, birds, including one swooping down on to a plant or branch, a pomegranate tree and baskets of fruit.

The designs were finely executed and the colours skilfully used to give a sense of liveliness and character to the animals portrayed. The high degree of technical accomplishment thus demonstrated makes it all the more surprising that the design in the nave appears to have been applied without regard to the available area. Not only is the pattern unsymmetrical so that there is no central pathway leading to the entrance of the bema, a fact that, in itself, is not necessarily of importance and which might be explained by the position of the ambo (of which no trace has remained), but the whole composition is slightly askew. This has resulted in a series of irregularities which are particularly noticeable in the shapes of the octagons and in the spacing of the interlacings along its southern edge. A similar lack of

[1] D. Koco, *op. cit.* p. 17.

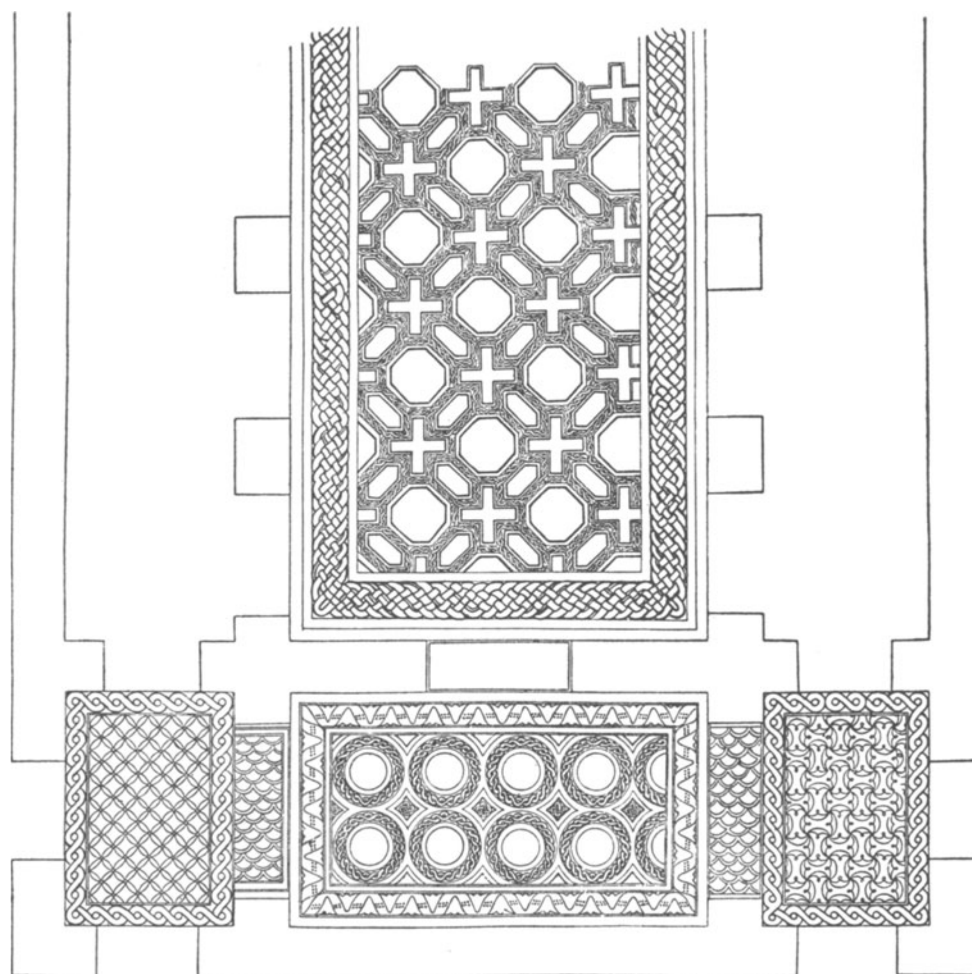


Fig. 160. BASILICA AT RADOLIŠTA. Outline drawing of the mosaic pattern in the narthex and nave. The figural motifs are not shown

symmetrical composition has resulted in the two incomplete medallions in the middle section of the narthex. These imperfections in an otherwise excellent design suggest an inability to adapt a copybook pattern, yet this is scarcely thinkable of the mosaicist responsible for the animal motifs. With the definitive publication of this monument promised by the Archaeological Museum of Skopje we may have the explanation of this anomaly, which perhaps was due to the employment of a local copyist for the skeleton of the composition and a skilled artist from elsewhere for the main subject matter.

Comparison of the ground plans of the Studenčišta and Radolišta basilicas with those of Tumba in Thessalonica (Fig. 71), Suvodol near Bitola (Fig. 128) and the Quatrefoil Baptistery Basilica at Stobi (Fig. 78) reveal similarities that suggest some degree of liturgical relationship. All five combine a semicircular Hellenistic apse with annexes which, placed north and south of the narthex and exonarthex, are of a more complex type than the simple Anatolian variety appearing in the neighbourhoods of Caričin Grad and Niš. Probably because it lay more to the north the Stobi basilica has a closer affinity to the Caričin Grad group than have the other four. The church at Tumba, it was suggested on pages 101 and 159, demonstrated the presence in Thessalonica of liturgical practices emanating from Northern Mesopotamia. If this is so, it is a mark of their strength that their influence should still appear, perhaps a century or more later, in such outlying places as Studenčišta and Radolišta, as well as a notable advertisement of the authority and prestige retained by Thessalonica through the troubled second half of the fifth century.

Discussing the probable dates of the two churches, Koco remarks that while the subject matter of the mosaics suggests the fifth century, stylistically they

belong rather to the beginning of the sixth.[1] This could be explained by the insecurity of the latter half of the fifth century and the early years of the sixth which, coupled with the distance of Ohrid from the main centres of Byzantine culture, would be reason enough for the ecclesiastical art of the region to lag behind contemporary fashion. In fact, on stylistic grounds the figural motifs could have been a product of the same workshop responsible for the seemingly even more anachronistic mosaics in the nave of the South Church at Caričin Grad, a church in which, as has already been noted, there are geometrical patterns similar to some of those in Radolišta. While the latter are, however, too common to be an aid in precise chronology, the figural motifs offer a strong argument in favour of Radolišta and the South Church being contemporary buildings. If this is accepted it follows that Radolišta, Studenčišta and the Early Byzantine predecessor of Sveta Sofija in Ohrid may have been built about the middle of the sixth century. This date would certainly accord better with the basilicas' relatively large dimensions and with the quality of their mosaic decoration than would the unsettled early years of the century.

A *circa* mid-sixth-century date would also give the three churches roles in Justinian's great effort to retain the Balkans through a combination of military strength and Byzantine — that is to say, Christian — civilisation in the teeth of the increasingly deep penetration and destructive raids of the Slavs, Avars and Huns. In the Ohrid region the Byzantine authorities would doubtless also have had to deal with a resurgence of Illyrian paganism. This view of the purpose of these churches is supported by the presence at Radolišta, as in the South Church and at Konjuh, of liturgical motifs which had little connection with the ecclesiastical art of the capital or even of Thessalonica, but which would have been comprehensible to the unsophisticated newcomers.

If the assumption that Lychnidus and Ohrid are identical is correct, a *circa* mid-sixth-century date for the episcopal basilica at Studenčišta — after the earthquake which reduced Lychnidus to ruins sometime between 527 and 565 — would also be logical. Its nearness to Ohrid would be explained by its being built as the new seat, either temporary or intended as permanent, of the Bishop of Lychnidus. In this case, did it also replace a Slav temple or sacred site? It is possible, for springs were particularly venerated by the Slavs, more so, as far as we know, than by the Illyrians. A final decision regarding the date and the purpose of the basilica at Studenčišta must, however, await its full publication, including a definitive analysis and dating of the mosaics, by the National Museum of Ohrid.

[1] D. Koco, *op. cit.* pp. 21-5.

34. THE BASILICA AT OKTISI

Oktisi, a village lying north-west of Struga among the foothills of Mount Jablanica, was the site of an Early Byzantine basilica, the ruins of which, first discovered in 1927, were the subject of more thorough excavations in 1959.[2] Although the work was hampered by a later church standing over the greater part of the nave, it was established that the basilica had possessed a nave with two aisles and a narthex with projecting annexes to the north and south. The latter annex, situated directly south of the narthex, was found to have been a baptistery.

As at Studenčišta and Radolišta the nave and narthex had mosaic floors. In the narthex the decoration of the two sections corresponding to the aisles was again purely geometrical. The middle section, which in spite of extensive damage Miljković-Pepek has been able to reconstruct in outline, presented, however, a symbolism quite different from those of the other two churches. Approaching it from the west, in the foreground two opposed lambs stood each side of a cantharus. Behind them rose four columns carrying an architrave, the central section being arched. Standing on the flat part of the architrave on each side of the arch (presumably, for only one side has been preserved) was a large cantharus from which two rather small birds, standing on trees or branches, appeared to be drinking (Fig. 161).

This composition, opening before the worshipper

[2] D. Koco, 'Basiliques paléochrétiennes dans la région du lac d'Ohrid', *Recueil des Travaux, Musée National d'Ohrid, 1961*, p. 16. (The 1959 excavations were carried out by P. Miljković-Pepek of the Archaeological Museum of Skopje.)

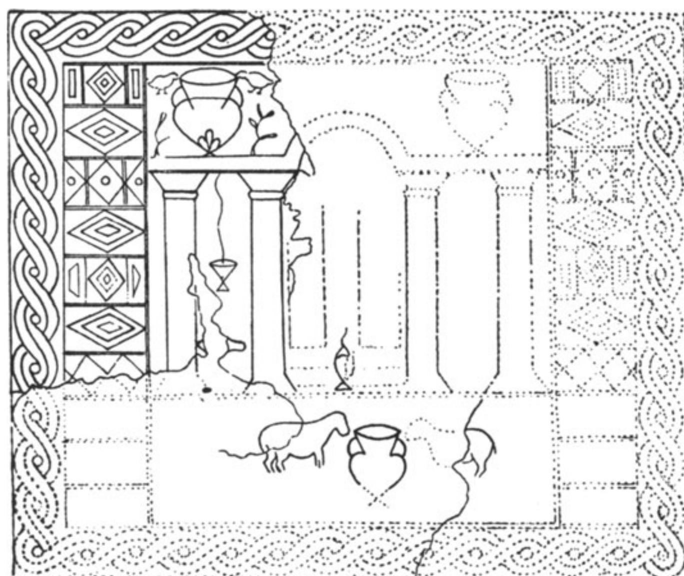


Fig. 161. BASILICA AT OKTISI. Outline drawing of the middle section of the narthex mosaic. (Reconstruction by Miljković-Pepek)

as he entered the narthex from the atrium or exo-narthex and which he crossed before entering the nave, symbolised the threshold of Paradise. A comparison of Figure 161 with Plates 14–19 and Figures 48–53 demonstrates its relationship with the dome mosaics of St George in spite of the fact that one appears in a distant provincial church of probably the late fifth or early to mid-sixth century and the other is an example of imperial art from one of the Empire's leading cities in the late fourth.

A more precise dating of the basilica and a full description of the architectural remains and of the mosaic decoration on the floors must await the final publication of the excavations. In view of the unusually interesting narthex mosaic it is to be hoped that the Archaeological Museum of Skopje will be in a position to issue this in the near future.

The building of the later church over the ruined nave argues the likelihood of a local religious tradition associated with the site. Although no evidence has yet been found, the possibility that this tradition may originally have been pagan is suggested by the nearby presence of a spring, the flow of which not even a dry summer diminishes. In this event, the erection of the first Christian basilica on the site would have been planned with the specific purpose of destroying and exorcising its pagan legacy. As at Studenčišta this is not improbable, whether the first Oktisi basilica was built in the sixth century or considerably earlier. In the west of Macedonia, as at Philippi and Thasos in the east, paganism remained an often far from latent foe of Christianity throughout the Early Byzantine period.

Chapter XI

The End of an Era

THE fourth, fifth and sixth centuries were a period of strife, social turmoil and military reverses that involved the Byzantine Empire in huge territorial losses. In spite of this background it was the era in which the permanent foundations of Byzantine, or Orthodox Christianity were securely laid. In this study of Early Byzantine Churches in Macedonia and Southern Serbia we have seen simplicity of worship give way to elaborate and ceremonial ritual; the altar move from an open position, enclosed only by a low parapet or partition so that it remained in full view of the participating congregation, to one behind a high, curtained screen (the forerunner of the iconostasis) in the central section of a tripartite sanctuary; the Hellenistic basilica transformed by degrees into a domed and centralised church. These were the outward signs of the gradual formation of the character of Byzantine Christianity in this particular region, and generally speaking they were typical of ecclesiastical developments in the Empire as a whole. In the course of the sixth and seventh centuries — earlier in the capital, later in the provinces — this formative era ended in the establishment of a relatively stable and enduring synthesis of the different religious approaches of East and West which existed within the Empire.

Konjuh, and its contemporaries the South Church of Caričin Grad and Basilica B at Philippi, deserve the description of historic monuments to an unusual degree. They reflect not only a crucial moment of balance in the synthesis of different cultures, but an equally crucial point in the transition from one era to another. Unfortunately, the failure of the Byzantines to maintain their western defences violently and drastically interrupted the course of Balkan history. The change that actually took place throughout Dardania, most of Macedonia and their neighbouring territories was not the gradual evolution from Hellenistic and Early Byzantine times into the Middle Ages that occurred in the cities of Constantinople and Thessalonica. In regions overrun by the Avars, Slavs and Bulgars not monuments, but destruction, neglect, decay and temporary desolation were the counterparts of the Aghia Sophias of these two cities.

Nevertheless, for all the variety of short-term stratagems and expedients which occupy so many pages of Byzantine history, the politico-religious policy of Byzantium was no less thoroughly founded upon long-term considerations than that of Rome. Although the descent and settlement of the Slavs extinguished Christianity over vast areas of the Balkans, after an interval of two or three centuries of darkness, it returned, the concomitant of 'Middle' Byzantine civilisation. Constantinople failed in its political aim of physically reasserting its permanent dominion over the new states of Serbia and Bulgaria. Yet in both these countries, as well as in Macedonia, the earliest churches built by the newcomers were reconstructions of, or were constructed upon the foundations of those their ancestors had sacked. Similarly, the 'new' civilisations were derived from those same sources that earlier had been responsible for the erection of the old churches.

Millet has traced the architectural influence of Asia Minor on Greece and Macedonia in the middle and late Byzantine Period.[1] This, however, existed when the first Serbian or Raška group of churches was modelled upon the ruined buildings of Caričin Grad and its neighbourhood, even to the inclusion of the 'Hilani' narthex — an extraordinary continuity of tradition which Balkan history has not yet fully explained. To a considerable degree Thessalonica reasserted its old artistic leadership in the later Middle Ages and, with

[1] G. Millet, *L'École grecque dans l'architecture byzantine* (Paris, 1916).

those of Constantinople, her painters provided much of the inspiration for the ecclesiastical art of Macedonia and the new kingdom of Serbia, as well as making important contributions themselves.[1]

When the Byzantine Empire disappeared in the sixteenth century, destroyed by the joint efforts of West and East, Orthodox Christianity remained the undisputed religious, and even, in times of repression, the political inspiration of Macedonians, Serbs, Greeks, Bulgarians and Rumanians. Archaeology is only now beginning to reveal the depth and complexity of the Byzantine foundations of this inspiration.

As we have seen, not least among its formative and enduring influences were the ancient civilisation and early church of Persia and the liturgies of Antioch and Edessa. Yet the legacy of Greece also persisted, preserving the humanistic impulse which was to be the source of western Europe's Renaissance.

[1] A. Xyngopoulos, *Thessalonique et la peinture macédonienne* (Athens, 1955). (A monograph containing much useful material but which tends to overemphasise the contribution of mediaeval Thessalonica.)

Select Bibliography of the Monuments

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2. The Agora Basilica, Thasos

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6. The Basilica of St Demetrius, Thessalonica

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